

Conflict in JP's Politics

Bhola Chatterji



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CONFLICT IN JP'S POLITICS

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To my daughter Angana

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FOREWORD

by

Chandrashekhar

Foreword

I have glanced through the manuscript written by Bhola Chatterji about Jayaprakash Narayan. Bhola is known for his critique of political personalities in whose contact he has come. He has been fortunate to have come not only in contact with many outstanding socialist leaders but was very close to them. Of whom JP was one. Bhola saw JP from very close quarters and his opinion of him may be expected to be objective.

But there is always the possibility of being mistaken about assessing the personality of JP as a seeker of truth. As a seeker of ideas and principles, he often appeared to be vacillating in the opinion of many because he changed his views of and on. He never took a decision on the issue of ideology because it was ever a developing, a continuing quest till the last days of his life.

There was another aspect of JP which Bhola has emphasised—and rightly so. It is that JP as a man of action was a determined personality. In fact these were the two sides of JP's personality, one a seeker of ideas and the other a man of action.

As a man of action JP was very firm and dedicated. In 1942, when Gandhiji urged the people of India to "Do or die", it was merely a slogan to many of the leaders of the national movement but to JP it was a matter of life and death. And he did not pull his punches. It was equally so in 1974-75, that is, in the evening of his life, when JP started his crusade against corruption, injustice and misrule.

At that time I advised the powers that be that they should not give way to the temptation of wrongly assessing the personality of JP, as many had done, that he was vacillating and at one stage or the other would abandon the movement and sit back. I said that nothing of the kind would happen, JP might once again stake his life and then it would be too difficult, rather impossible for the rulers to

face the situation. That was exactly what happened. Indeed, this revealed JP's real personality. It is necessary that this should be emphasised so that it may become an abiding source of inspiration for the generations to come.

Bhola Chatterji has never been sparing of criticism of even his closest friends and the people whom he admires most. He has done the same to JP. Those who know Bhola as a writer and as an objective analyst of men and politics cannot take exception to this. He writes for posterity but at certain points his criticism runs sharp to the extent that one may feel offended. But knowing the relationship between JP and Bhola I can say that whatever criticism there is, it has been just to assess the personality of JP.

Yet another aspect of JP's life which, though brought into focus, should have been emphasised more was the human aspect. Even in the company of the most ordinary persons JP always tried to meet them at his own level. He was so careful about the people who came in contact with him that sometimes one was overwhelmed by the affection and the consideration shown to him. Even for his worst critics JP had affection. For instance, Rammanohar Lohia. JP held Lohia in great affection although he was often bitterly critical of JP. In the last phase of his life Lohia realised his mistake and JP cried when Lohia went the way of all flesh.

This is an objectively critical study of JP. Of course it is not possible to be as clinically objective in historiography as, say, in Physics or Statistics. The very process of selection of some facts from among a large volume of them would automatically suggest a certain bias and Bhola is not immune from it. But it may be justifiably said that he has scrupulously stuck to the adage—Facts are sacred, opinion is free. He has tried to be strictly honest so far as facts are concerned.

August 24, 1983.

(Chandra Shekhar)

Introduction

Jayaprakash Narayan was one of the century's most controversial Indians. For better or worse, he occupied a unique place in the life of the people for nearly five decades. His political career appears to have followed almost all along a tortuous path that often terminated in a blind alley. He entered the political arena as a Marxist, labelling Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi a "bourgeois reformist," but soon claimed to have discovered in democratic socialism the panacea to the social, political and economic problems that smote the country. In the years immediately after India attained freedom, he continued to put his trust in democratic socialism, but his opinion of Gandhi changed. He was convinced that "socialism in this country would neglect Gandhism at its peril."

Jayaprakash withdrew from the socialist movement, or rather from active politics, in the mid-1950s to devote his whole time to the *bhoodan sarvodaya* movement, concluding that it alone could find a way to the promised land. The process of change in his political thinking did not stop here. He went a step further to reject the party system, including parliamentary democracy.

Between then and 5 June 1974, when he declared that "the Bihar movement's ... ultimate aims were nothing less than total revolution," there was a distance of about one decade and a half. Within this short time Jayaprakash seemed to have turned about, politically speaking. The party system and all that went with it were no longer taboo. Not only that, the emerging socio-political realities propelled him to conclude that the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement had in the given context become irrelevant.

After his withdrawal from the socialist movement, of which he was one of the chief architects, the others being Narendra Deva and Rammanohar Lohia, Jayaprakash was variously described as a confused ideologue whose

political life was full of inconsistencies, and escapist who had no understanding of the realities on the ground. By the time free India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, died Jayaprakash had been dismissed as a spent force. And yet this man was set on a pedestal at the fairly advanced age of 72 to be acclaimed as "the second liberator [the first being Gandhi] of the country" in 1977. To countless Indians he became very much the Lokanayak, the man who played the titled role in the drama that this country witnessed after the proclamation of emergency in June 1975.

His frequent changes of political views, some may contend, could not be avoided because he found them inadequate to meet the challenge of the times. Others may suggest that Jayaprakash and Lohia had since 1947 applied their energies to creating an alternative power centre to Congress. Lohia's political line was spade-prison-vote: spade or constructive work among the people; prison or building up mass power through movements and agitation; and vote or fighting elections, the emphasis being on the second item of activity. On the other hand, Jayaprakash was somewhat lukewarm to prison and vote in the initial stage, particularly after the 1952 general election, and addressed himself to constructive work. His commitment was to build up a movement rather than a party, a plausible explanation being that a party was basically an instrument for fighting elections and capturing state power, but a movement went beyond that.

In the 1967 elections, Lohia turned his attention to setting up united fronts in order to create a national alternative to Congress. He succeeded, at the state level, in creating an alternative of sorts but Jayaprakash was not very enthusiastic. A decade later, however, in March 1977, Jayaprakash recognised the need for a party. And he spared no pains to rig up, without formally associating himself with it, the Janata Party, comprising opposition groups of various political persuasions, not excluding the Jana Sangh. Jayaprakash thus returned to Lohia's idea of creating an alternative to Congress at the national level.

But the alternative he created was a caricature of what he presumably had in mind. He did not have to wait long to discover that it was not commitment to an ideology but a combination of other factors, such as personal prejudices, caste and personality equations, that determined the approach of the Janata Party, which was in fact a loose coalition of disparate groups and individuals, to men and affairs. One thing led to another, and he arraigned the Janata government for "treading the same old beaten track which led the Congress government to failure."

The past lay behind him; the present was utterly disappointing; and the future looked uncertain. The Janata Party, his creation, disowned him. He felt deserted. Imploringly, he sought to remind the men who had, thanks to him, lodged themselves in the corridors of power, of the pledge he had made them give the nation at Rajghat in April 1977.

But who was so innocent as to heed his warning that the gap between promise and fulfilment should not widen, that the people should not be mocked with false hopes. This only reminded him of what happened to Gandhi, in whose footsteps he had tried to follow, when he made efforts to fight the corrupting influence of power on those that were supposed to be his sworn disciples. After all, as Louis Fischer observed, even Gandhi's "own high authority was no match for the power of a government born of his efforts and whose members touched his feet in obeisance."

As the story of Jayaprakash drew to a close, it acquired tragic proportions. He died a man not at peace with himself, but not in a personal sense. His discontent with the given political system was understandable. Also understandable was his search for an alternative, convinced as he was that the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy could not work in the Indian context. Indeed, he endeavoured to hew a new path for this complex society to build a viable, egalitarian and democratic system. But the alternative he suggested, his

thoughts and ideas, his concept of total revolution remained in the rough. They were not formulated logically, nor integrated into what might provide a rational, workable and enduring alternative. It may of course be viewed from another angle, suggesting that Jayaprakash was born ahead of his time, the concept of total revolution was perfectly logical, he picked up the threads where Gandhi had left them and that, at a philosophical level, he was nearer Gandhi than any other Indian.

In the pages that follows it is not proposed to take on the assignment of defending or debunking Jayaprakash. Whether or not he was a man of destiny, whether or not his concept of total revolution provides a key to the ultimate solution of the country's problem of bread and bliss, I do not claim to know. Only an attempt has been made here to understand the man and his ideas, to see things in the right perspective and, if possible, to set the record of one of the most turbulent periods in post-independence India straight. One thing, however, may be said for certain—history will remember him for his nonconformism, his indomitable spirit that would easily remind one of the men who stood their ground at Haldighat.

The study begins at an arbitrary point and then ventures to look back upon the past, travelling backwards and forwards. Mention may also be made of the fact that I found it difficult to do even minimum justice to the subject without frequently quoting Jayaprakash *in extenso*. That perhaps is enough justification for the lengthy quotations.

A duty must now be performed and obligations acknowledged. I should like to state clearly that the book would not have seen the light of day but for the very generous support that Dr. B. P. Adhikari, Director of the Indian Statistical Institute, gave me by way of a post-superannuation reappointment for one year. Without this institutional assistance it would not have been possible for me to complete the book. Dr. Adhikari is to be thanked also for reading the manuscript and commenting on it while it was being prepared. I am indebted to Mr

Chandra Shekhar, president of the Janata Party, for the valuable suggestions, lengthy taped interview, and liberty he ungrudgingly allowed me to call on him frequently for clarification of many controversial issues relating to the JP movement.

My sincere gratitude goes to Mr M J Akbar, editor of *the Telegraph* and *Sunday*, a more indulgent friend than whom it is hard to come across. It was because of his unfailing sympathy and consideration that I could often write on Jayaprakash for *Sunday* and also liberally draw upon them for material. I am grateful to the Ananda Bazar group of publications for allowing me to draw upon several of my articles which were originally published in the extinct *Hindusthan Standard* at different times. Mr Sankar Ghose joint editor, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, deserves my thanks for his kind permission to use material from the articles I wrote for his paper from time to time. I acknowledge my debt of gratitude to Professor Raj Krishna, with whom I have had the privilege of discussing a great many things about Jayaprakash and his politics. My thanks are also due to Dr Hari Dev Sharma, Head, Research and Publications, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, for the large measure of help he rendered me both in his personal and official capacity.

I must also thank Mr Devendra Prasad Singh, former Vice-Chancellor, Bhagalpur University, Dr Suraj Bandyopadhyay, Sociological Research Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, and Mr Indra Sen, Assistant Editor, *Business Standard*, for their helpful comments. I shall be remiss in my duty if I fail to remember gratefully the late Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala and the late Brahmanand for their support, encouragement and constructive criticism. I wish to thank Mr Trevor Drieberg for his editorial service and impartial criticism. Mr Ashish K Basu, Mr Ramendra N Biswas and Mr Naryan Chandra Saha of the Sociological Research Unit deserve my thanks for typing the manuscript. And to my wife Anubha a word of sincere appreciation.

Finally, it should be unreservedly stated that although

I worked on this study, an approved research project, as a member of the Sociological Research Unit, I alone am responsible for the errors and opinions in the book.

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CHAPTER I

Ahead of His Time

If one peers into the twilight out of which Jayaprakash Narayan emerged in 1977 to be acclaimed the saviour of Indian democracy, it could easily be seen that his nearly five-decade-long political career had almost all along followed a tortuous course that often seemed to terminate in a blind alley. Yet it is no exaggeration that no Indian in the post-independence era, with the obvious exceptions of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, came anywhere near stirring the feelings of the people as Jayaprakash did.

The passion, furore and controversy he caused, the battles he lost and accolades he earned are now things of the past. The homage and tributes are over and myth and reality have started their interplay with the memory of his life. Naturally, the crucial assessment will have to follow.

But what do we make of him? Whatever may be the final verdict of history—one might not agree with his ideas, dialectically one might make mincemeat of his concept of total revolution, one might even be tempted to conclude that his thoughts and ideas were woolly and he was a muddle-headed theoriser who often deserted what he had earlier considered the only path that could lead to the promised land—that would not detract from the fact that all through his intensely lived and eventful political life this man had consistently been in search of ideas that might trace a new path for the country.

The mind drifts to a June day in the mid-1970s. That 25 June 1975, is a watershed in the life of the country since the attainment of freedom is hard to dispute. Jayaprakash had given the call for total revolution and government was determined to liquidate the forces which might respond to it. It was touch and go whether India would survive as a viable democracy.

The March 1977 parliamentary election gave the verdict that the country's democratic system was not negotiable. But did the installation of a Janata government in office imply the achievement of the objective Jayaprakash had set himself. Far from it, he said. He did not equate electoral success with the completion of his mission. For he could appreciate that a great distance had still to be covered before his dream would be translated into reality, the dream of an India "in which officials and representatives are the servants of the people.... It is a community dedicated to *anttyodaya* [welfare of the least and the lowliest]." In short, he emphasised, "my vision is of a free, progressive and Gandhian India¹, that is realisation of the goal of total revolution, nonviolent and value-based.

And how did Jayaprakash look at the result of his life's work? When in his last days he brooded over the prospect of the impending failure of his most cherished creation—the Janata Party—was he at peace with himself? He told me in July 1978, "Well, I don't claim to be entirely at peace with myself. In a personal sense, I am. But when I look at what is happening around me I feel very unhappy, then I am surely not at peace with myself. I would like to do something about what I think is going wrong, but, unfortunately, partly because of my illness and partly because of other limitations I am unable to do very much. That adds to my dissatisfaction with myself and the situation that obtains over which I can't have complete control."²

Was this the same man who had only the other day raised the nation from the dead? Quite so, said the Janata Party president, Chandra Shekhar, when I asked him for his assessment of Jayaprakash's role in rescuing India from authoritarianism. The answer was, in Chandra

¹Quoted in Vasant Nargolkar, "Split in Sarva Seva Sangh seems unavoidable," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 6 May 1977.

²Author-Jayaprakash taped interview on 6 July 1978. Also see *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 4 November 1978, which published it. The tapes of this interview as well as of the other interviews subsequently referred to are in the custody of the Sociological Research Unit of the Indian Statistical Institute. There will therefore be no further mention of them.

Shekhar's own words: "Bhola, you know my opinion about Jayaprakash Narayan. His role in saving democracy in this country was assessed by me as early as in 1974. It was for the first time after 1947, if I may say, after Mahatma Gandhi, Jayaprakash was the only person who enthused the masses to assert certain values in our public life. At that time the prestige of our parliamentary institutions, our democratic institutions was slowly being eroded and Jayaprakash tried to draw the attention of the nation to that problem. Corruption in high places, favouritism, nepotism, infighting for power—these were some of the maladies that were eating into the very vitals of our democracy. Jayaprakash started his movement on these issues. But, unfortunately, those who were in power did not understand the rationale of that movement. At that time I pleaded with Mrs Indira Gandhi time and again that she should have a dialogue with JP so that we together could find some solution to these problems. Instead of trying to find a solution to these problems, she perhaps thought that power was everything. I made a statement at that time that with the political power Mrs Gandhi enjoyed and the moral power Jayaprakash possessed both should unite to lift the country out of the morass.

"But that did not happen. I feel that if JP had not started the movement at that time perhaps we would have been caught in the trap of authoritarianism. Though I was in Congress, I tried my best to save the country and Congress from being driven to the wall. I have no hesitation in admitting, however, that it was of little avail. Most of the time it was just a cry in the wilderness. But when JP took the lead in the movement people were enthused, they were involved.

"Though the movement was suppressed after the declaration of Emergency, I am reminded of the 1942 movement. Many people thought after the 1942 movement that the British had succeeded in suppressing for all time the urge for freedom. But soon after 1942, when people came out of jail, we saw the upsurge of humanity in this country. The people showed the same enthusiasm, redoubled courage and vigour.

"The same thing happened in February 1977. No sooner

had we come out of jail than we saw that what JP had done during 1974 and 1975 did not go waste. People remembered all that was responsible for the demoralisation in the nation, and they also remembered the sacrifice JP had made. I think the Janata Party could win the elections only because JP had sown the seeds of courage and determination among the people. That contribution cannot be forgotten. Mahatma Gandhi gave us freedom, JP gave us the will to survive as a democratic nation."³

Not a few Indians shared Chandra Shekhar's opinion. Just one instance would suffice for our purpose. Until recently, up to the declaration of emergency, it was firmly believed that no 20th century Indian came anywhere near deserving to be measured alongside Gandhi. The belief suddenly changed when, like thieves in the night, the authorities whisked Jayaprakash off to prison.

Between that ominous night and July 1977 not much time elapsed. But the nation's political life had meanwhile witnessed a great transformation. In a glittering presentation ceremony on 16 July 1977, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan awarded Jayaprakash a *tamrapatra*, a copper plaque which described him as "a blazing star of the twentieth century, illuminating the path of wisdom and courage to a nation temporarily atrophied by the dark clouds of tyranny, injustice, fear and frustration."

The citation further said: "We venerate you as the messiah who led us to freedom from native dictatorship through a unique ballot-box revolution in 1977 as we do the Mahatma who led us to freedom from foreign rule through a historically unique nonviolent revolution in 1947." According to M C Chagla, who read the citation, "While Gandhi created the nation Jayaprakash taught how the nation should live."⁴

The applause died away much too soon, almost abruptly. What followed seemed to suggest that Jayaprakash had not lost much of his genius for contending passions on all

³Author-Chandra Shekhar taped interview on 13 July 1978. Also see *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 4 November 1978, which published it.

⁴*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 17 July 1977.

sides. If some idolised him as a man of destiny, others asserted that his political life was full of inconsistencies, that what he passionately held a brief for in the morning was jettisoned before the twilight merged into darkness. It was held that his concept of total revolution had basic contradictions and that its goal, theoretical aspect and the methodological questions involved had not been logically spelt out. In reality, it was a mere slogan that had been continually harped on to serve a given purpose. The contention was that Jayaprakash was a wavering ideologue whose emotions always got the better of his reason.

A pause may be permitted here to get a glimpse of the man from another angle. Let us recollect an August day some 35 years ago, 9 August 1942. Gandhi had been taken into custody. So also were Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad, Vallabhbhai Patel, J B Kripalani and a host of other leaders and workers of the Indian National Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose, who perforce had to leave the country, was busy raising a liberation army abroad.

But the entire nation could not possibly be suppressed. The people rebelled. They took to the streets. Their battle-cry was "Quit India" and the pledge "Do or Die." India was afire. Of the men who added fuel to the flames Jayaprakash stood in the forefront. Describing his role in the August movement, the Government of India observed: "From the beginning of the struggle the Congress Socialist Party [CSP], a group within the main party and an integral part of the Congress, had played an important part....

"The escape from Hazaribagh Jail in early November of Jayaprakash Narayan, of the Congress Socialist Party, the same man whose detected attempt to smuggle letters from Deoli in 1941 had caused such a sensation and who in those letters had poured scorn on the 'farce of satyagraha' and had called for the organisation of a secret wing which would not pay even lip service to the creed of non-violence, further increased the influence of this leftwing of the Congress. With the arrest from time to time of certain of the leaders, Jayaprakash Narayan came to play an increasingly important part in the direction of a move-

ment, which was by now indistinguishable from an underground revolutionary movement."⁵

Some 33 years had passed between then and 25 June 1975. In terms of time this was not very long. But not so otherwise, for India suddenly found itself confronted with the worst political crisis since the attainment of freedom in 1947. The villain of the piece, according to the most dominant segment of the ruling Congress Party and its allies, was none other than the 72-year-old Jayaprakash. Independent India's third Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, did not choose to be euphemistic when she insinuated that he had become the most untiring spokesman of the forces of reaction; and in him treasonous elements found the man they could count upon. If Indira Gandhi did not talk for the mere pleasure of it, the reference was clearly to the opposition movement in Gujarat, which she rated nothing short of "an attempt by fascist forces to subvert the democratic system."⁶

In her broadcast over All India Radio on 26 June 1975 she observed, elaborating the reasons for the proclamation of emergency, that "in the name of democracy it has been sought to negate the very functioning of democracy." She did not stop there. Referring obviously to Jayaprakash, she said that "certain persons have gone to the length of inciting our armed forces to mutiny and our police to rebel."⁷

On the face of it, there was not much difference between the two assessments, notwithstanding the vast political change the country had meanwhile undergone. If the colonial rulers were convinced that Jayaprakash posed a threat to the empire, Indira Gandhi also was of the opinion that he endangered the security of the state. This indeed was a mockery of fate.

Between then and March 1977 was a distance of barely two years. The forces of authoritarianism had seemingly

⁵*Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942-43* (Published with authority), preface by Richard Tottenham, Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1943, pp 24-25.

⁶*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 2 March 1974.

⁷*Ibid*, 27 June 1975.

been made to bite the dust and the Janata Party installed in office with the 82-year-old Morarji Desai as Prime Minister, thanks once again to Jayaprakash. We could depend on him to testify to this. In his own words: "I helped them to come to power because I had hoped they would yet write a new chapter of India's history."⁸

But Desai had a different opinion of the man who made it possible for him to become prime minister. The balance-sheet of the Janata Party's performance from its assumption of office however left Jayaprakash in no doubt that it "was treading the same old beaten track which led the Congress government to failure and the nation to the brink of disaster." The need of the hour therefore was, he emphasised, to get the "caravan of the total revolution",⁹ which had come to a halt after the formation of the Janata government at the centre, on the move.

This incited Desai to observe that if Jayaprakash "wants to say that, he can say so. I do not want to enter into a confrontation with Mr Narayan."¹⁰ Prime Minister Desai did not let the matter rest here. He later got it clearly understood, particularly when infighting had almost made the Janata Party a caricature of itself, that "Jayaprakash Narayan is not the arbiter in party affairs."¹¹ For that matter, Desai emphasised, "Mr Narayan may tell many things, but that does not mean I am going to accept them."¹²

The conclusion may not be wide of the mark that Jayaprakash, branded a rebel by both the colonial and the indigenous rulers, was also a thorn in the flesh of the men whom he had helped climb the ladder of power. One of the notable exceptions was Janata president Chandra Shekhar.

Spatially, Nasik prison is not a long way from the detention camp at Chandigarh. In another context of course there was a great deal of difference between the two. The

⁸*Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 15 August 1978.

⁹*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 6 June 1978.

¹⁰*Times of India*, New Delhi, 19 June 1978.

¹¹*Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 23 July 1978.

¹²*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 23 August 1978.

journey Jayaprakash embarked on at Nasik in 1932 never for a moment caused him to despair of its successful completion. If it was destined to be long and arduous, it also promised freedom from bondage, freedom to be master in one's own house. There was nothing that could make him lose hope and courage, and the future looked far from uncertain.

Entirely different was the scene on 25 June 1975. There was darkness all round. Jayaprakash had little hope of ever stepping out of the Chandigarh detention camp to complete his unfinished mission. He had nothing to look forward to and he did not conceal it: "My world lies in a shambles all around me. I am afraid I shall not see it put together again in my lifetime."¹³

He was greatly disillusioned, for it seemed as if a tidal wave had submerged his accustomed world. All his calculations, his assurance, his hopes and dreams had gone haywire. Nothing would perhaps explain this more vividly than his admission that "Indiraji's regime may be remembered in history for its many achievements or lack of them—its most notable achievement is the murder of democracy—but for me it will be remembered...as a regime in independent India in which I experienced for the first time teargass, lathi blows [from the Central Reserve Police and detention since my release from detention in April 1946 from Agra central prison I had never been arrested or detained]."¹⁴

That he considered his detention under the emergency the most searing experience in his life was perhaps because it wrecked the feeling of immunity he had nursed all along. He never imagined that he could be taken into custody in free India, notwithstanding his opposition, not necessarily passive always, to those in power. Contrast this with the fact that Rammanohar Lohia, who was Jayaprakash's colleague in the Indian socialist movement and one of its most important leaders, had suffered incarceration no less than 14 times after freedom.

¹³Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary 1975*, Abhay Prakashan, Pune, 1977, p 11.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp 15-16.

His apprehension eventually proved unfounded. The people saw to it that democracy in this country did not go the way it had in most Third World Countries. Soon after the Janata Party government was established, an apparently contented Jayaprakash declared on a short stop-over in London on the way to the US for medical treatment: "My life's work is done now".¹⁵

This conclusive statement bemused not a few, particularly those who had knowledge of his chequered political life. Other things apart, did he not emphasise in his message to the inaugural conference of the Janata Party, even as he said that his task had been completed, that "the country's problems are very serious and vast and it will take a long time to find solutions to all of them."¹⁶

Of course he explained in a way what prompted him to say this. Answering my question in a taped interview on 22 April 1978, "On 1 May last year you said 'I feel my life's work is done'. What exactly did you mean?"—Jayaprakash observed: "What I might have meant was that in the political field independence had been achieved and democracy rescued from an internal danger. I did have some part to play in that drama, and when I said that my life's work was done I might have meant these things.

"Essentially, I am not a political being in the sense that I don't aspire to any political position of power or influence but I would certainly like to see poverty abolished, caste abolished and a new society created in which all men are equal. This does not mean everyone would have equal wealth or property or happiness but at least all must have a fair opportunity, and there should be no barriers. I believe that the basis of this new society has been achieved, though I am sure a great deal remains to be done....Maybe at that time I felt that what had already been done or what I had been able to do was all that I could do. And in that sense my life's work was done."¹⁷

What he said in explanation of his statement satisfied

¹⁵*Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 2 May 1977.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Sunday*, Vol. 6, Issue 15, 25 June 1978, p. 20.

neither his critics nor his friends. But there was nothing new in it. On more occasions than one he seemed to have landed himself in a position that only produced a crop of questions. So much so that he came to be identified as the subcontinent's most unpredictable man in politics.

He had been, especially since his withdrawal from the socialist movement in the early 1950s, variously described as a confused idealist who habitually went off at a tangent, an escapist, a shirker. By the time Jawaharlal Nehru went the way of all flesh Jayaprakash was dismissed as a spent force, if you like a burntout case. He was put in the dock, condemned and executed, politically speaking, by the intellectuals of almost every conceivable political persuasion.

Yet this man was set on a pedestal at the age of 72 and implored by nearly the entire spectrum of the opposition to snatch a brand from the burning, following the declaration of emergency. A grateful people acclaimed him as their saviour when the outcome of the sixth parliamentary election rang the knell of the 30-year-old, seemingly impregnable Congress rule. He appeared to stride the subcontinent like a colossus, albeit briefly.

The question is: What is Jayaprakash Narayan? A compulsive protester? An adventurer in the realm of ideas? A nihilist? An iconoclast for the love of iconoclasm? A seer born before his time? A late 20th century version of John Bunyan's Christian? A Wayfarer in search of an idyllic society? Or a lonely crusader intent on bearing his cross? In short, what is the essential Jayaprakash?

I asked Jayaprakash this question during one of the several taped interviews I had with him in April 1978. He replied: "Well, I think that is for others to find out. As far as I am concerned I do not pretend to know what is the essential Jayaprakash Narayan. All that I can say is that I have tried to be true to myself, I have not kept myself under any delusion. I know my faults, my failings, my failures, and the little success I had probably was due largely to circumstances and situations which were somewhat favourable. My own contribution might have been

very little. It is not false humility that makes me say so but I do feel like that."¹⁸

Reference might also be made to Jayaprakash's statement countering the charge that he had frequently changed from one line of thought and action to another. As he put it: "I have often been accused of changing my views and my fields of activity. I claim that through all the apparent changes, I have been pursuing a single goal, seeking the answer to a single question: How to make India independent and help establish a social, economic and political democracy? This search has taken me to several ideologies and political paths until I have arrived at the conclusion that Gandhiji holds the answer, not a mindless application of Gandhiji's ideas but their dynamic and revolutionary adaptation."¹⁹

This evidently overlooked the basic point that a claim could not be substituted for logical exposition. It would therefore be necessary to go into his long and complex political life to find a satisfactory answer.

¹⁸Author-Jayaprakash taped interview, 22 April 1978. Also see *Sunday*, Vol. 6, Issue 15, 25 June 1978, p. 20.

¹⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, (ed) Brahmanand, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1978, p. VII.

CHAPTER II

Marxian Detour

The concept of democratic socialism, unlike communism, appeared rather late on the Indian political scene. After the failure of the 1932 civil disobedience movement there was clear evidence of exhaustion in the ranks of Congress, of a feeling that the leader had left them in the lurch. Two trends were noticeable in Congress. A sizeable section gave vent to the feeling that they had reached the end of their tether. They looked askance at Gandhi's leadership. The question that seemed uppermost in their minds was "Where do we go from here?" and Gandhi could give no convincing answer. A measure of Gandhi's own restlessness could be had from the fact that he resigned his formal membership of Congress.

If he was aware of his own inadequacy, he also believed that "Congress had no real faith in his own principles and programme." He aired his feelings in his letter of resignation. It said, among other things, "that a very large body of Congress intelligentsia were tired of my methods and views and the programme based upon them, that I was a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of Congress, that instead of remaining the most democratic and representative organisation, it was dominated by my personality, that in it there was no free play of reason."²⁰ That these Congressmen were eager for some form of constitutional politics need not be repeated.

Another section of Congressmen, numerically small, keenly felt the need for a left of centre reorientation of the freedom struggle. Foremost among them were Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Asoka Mehta, Minoo Masani, Yusuf Meherally, S M Joshi and Ganga Sharan Sinha. The ques-

²⁰Quoted in Penderal Moon, *Gandhi and Modern India*, The English Universities Press, London, 1962, p 182.

tion of giving an organised expression to what had been discussed threadbare while some of them were together in Nasik prison, where they had been lodged after their arrest for participation in the civil disobedience movement. In a manner of speaking, this prison was the birth-place of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), Jayaprakash acting the part of midwife.

The fourth child of a lower middle class family, Jayaprakash was born, on 12 October 1902, at Sitabdiara, one of the innumerable nondescript villages abounding in Bihar. While studying at Patna College for his intermediate examination he married, at the age of 18, the fourteen-year-old Prabhavati. He left his studies to participate in the noncooperation movement, only to be disillusioned when Gandhi had it withdrawn after the Chauri-Chaura incident.²¹ He subsequently went to the United States for studies, leaving Prabhavati at Gandhi's ashram at Sabarmati in Gujarat. He worked in various capacities in the US, as a fruit packer, a waiter in a restaurant, to pay for his studies at as many as six universities.

During his stay in the US he was drawn to communism and enrolled himself a member of the American Communist Party. As he put it, "strangely enough, it was in the land of resilient and successful capitalism...that I became a convert to Marxism, or more precisely, to Soviet communism as it was then."²² The Marxist Jayaprakash was "persuaded" by M N Roy's "writings of those days... to believe that Gandhiji was against the social revolution and would at a moment of crisis hasten to uphold the system of exploitation and inequality."²³

On his return to India in November 1929, Jayaprakash met Nehru at Wardha ashram. Common interests form-

²¹Situated in the United Province (now Uttar Pradesh) Chauri Chaura shot into prominence; in February 1922, when Congress-led demonstrators burnt alive twentytwo policemen at the local police station, leading to Gandhi's abandonment of the contemplated struggle at Bardoli.

²²Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya* (second edition), Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Rajghat, Kashi, 1959, p 10.

²³*Ibid*, p 11.

ed a bond between the two men and Nehru invited him to join the labour department of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) as its secretary. He accepted the offer. Thereafter, Anand Bhavan, the Nehru family home in Allahabad, became his workplace until his involvement in the civil disobedience movement landed him in Nasik Road Central Jail. He also worked for two months in 1930 as private secretary to G D Birla, a Marwari businessman of Calcutta who subsequently became one of Gandhi's prominent hosts and financiers.

When the movement was on, Jayaprakash did a stint as acting general secretary of Congress in 1932. Two things that marked him out in this period were on one hand his affectionate relations with Nehru and cordial dislike of Gandhi, and complete disillusionment with the Moscow-oriented communist movement, in this case the Communist Party of India (CPI), on the other.

Much as he claimed to be a Marxist; he gave a wide berth to CPI as it dissociated itself from the mainstream of the national struggle. His argument was that "the Communists in India were only following, of course, the policy laid down by the Third Communist International, which by then come completely under the leadership of Stalin. The patently mistaken policy that the Comintern had been following since 1928 and which had resulted in the division of the labour and socialist movements throughout the world and in the isolation of the Communists from the national movements in all the colonial countries, appeared to me, as indeed it was later acknowledged to be, contrary to Marxist theory generally and specifically to the famous colonial policy enunciated by Lenin...I naturally kept away from the CPI and joined the ranks of the soldiers of freedom."²⁴

The Patna meeting of AICC on 18 and 19 May 1934 was something more than a routine exercise. Acting on Gandhi's advice, it formalised the suspension of the individual civil disobedience movement. It also sanctioned the All-India Swarajya Party's proposal to contest the ensuing Central

²⁴*Ibid*, p 13.

Legislative Assembly election.

Both decisions created a furore at the All India Socialist Conference held in Patna on 17 May 1934. Young radicals who participated in it attacked the proposal for council politics fiercely. They contended that this not only ran counter to "the 1929 Lahore resolution which had called for boycotting the legislatures and had demanded nothing less than complete independence," but also bore out the charge that "the nationalist movement, under the leadership of Gandhi and the old guard, was drifting inevitably towards constitutionalism and accommodation with the British."²⁵

It was acknowledged that in the circumstances it was necessary to reorient the freedom struggle and redefine and revise its objectives and methods. They were also sensitive to the deepening world economic crisis as well as the leapfrogging menace of fascism in Europe. This was a challenge to the young progressives, and they decided to respond to it by forming the Congress Socialist Party of Congressmen who had faith in socialism.

CSP was constituted as a group within Congress with Jayaprakash as its general secretary. According to its two most important founders, Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash, the party was Marxist and pledged to class struggle. Convinced as CSP was that Congress had failed to make any appreciable appeal to the working class, it took upon itself the task of making the toiling masses "restive and class conscious." This was to bring them into the arena of active class struggle through the economic appeal of socialism. CSP aspired to act as a corrective to Congress, gradually channelling the nationalist movement in the direction of socialism.

In his presidential address to the founding conference of CSP in Patna on 17 May 1934, Narendra Deva said: "We are at once met with the criticism that it is difficult to reconcile nationalism with socialism and that if we want to establish socialism in our country why not form

²⁵John Patrick Haithcox, *Communism and Nationalism in India: M.N. Roy and Comintern Policy 1920-1939*, OUP, 1971, pp 217-18.

ourselves into an independent group outside the Congress and act independently of its policy and be at the same time liberated from the reactionary influences of a lower middle class organisation."

To this his answer: "We do not wish to isolate ourselves from the great national movement against British imperialism which today Congress symbolises...the present stage of the Indian struggle is that of the bourgeois democratic revolution...he will be a shortsighted and a very narrow socialist who will refuse to take part in a national struggle simply on the ground that the struggle is being principally conducted by petty bourgeois elements of society although he will make ceaseless efforts to give it a socialist direction. In the peculiar conditions of India, the socialist can very well work within the Congress and combine the national struggle with socialism."²⁶

Soon after formation of CSP, the Congress Working Committee made it plain in a resolution adopted at Bombay on 17 and 18 June 1934 that "whilst the Working Committee welcomes the formation of groups representing different schools of thought it is necessary in view of the loose talk about confiscation of private property and necessity of class war to remind Congressmen that the Karachi resolution as finally settled by AICC at Bombay in August 1931...neither contemplates confiscation nor advocacy of class war. The Working Committee is further of opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of nonviolence."²⁷

The warning did not go completely unheeded. In an apparent effort to reassure the conservative segment of the Congress leadership, which in fact controlled the organisation, that the socialists were no intractable left revolutionaries, Jayaprakash talked somewhat pliantly at the first conference of the Bengal CSP, held in Calcutta on 21-23 September, 1935. His presidential address to the conference underlined that "the first and main task of

²⁶Narendra Deva, "Socialism and the National Movement." *Socialism and the National Revolution* (ed) Yusuf Meherally, Padma Publications, Bombay, 1946, pp 3-5.

²⁷*The Indian Annual Register* January-June 1934.

the party is to develop the anti-imperialist movement.... Our work within Congress is governed by the policy of developing it into a true anti-imperialist body."

To make the point still clearer, he said categorically that it was not CSP's "purpose.... to convert the whole Congress into a full-fledged socialist party. All we seek to do is to change the content and policy of that organisation so that it comes truly to represent the masses, having the object of emancipating them both from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation."²⁸

Further emphasising the point, he said in an article in the 23 May 1936 issue of *Congress Socialist*, the weekly party journal: "It may appear strange that those who profess socialism should say that they do not want to raise the issue of socialism in the Congress. This may look like a camouflage. It is neither. Our policy is dictated by the simple consideration that an organisation whose task it is to unite all genuinely anti-imperialist classes on one front against imperialism needs not a socialist but a broad anti-imperialist programme."²⁹

Pursuant to the colonial thesis of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), generally called the Third Period line, CPI (banned in 1934) branded CSP "as a 'left manoeuvre' of the capitalist class and 'social fascist'." As the Sixth Congress thesis put it, "international social democracy of all shades has become the last reserve of bourgeois society and its most reliable pillar of support" and that "social democracy...often plays a *fascist role* in periods when the situation is critical for capitalism."³⁰

CPI, which was astringently critical of Congress, castigated CSP as a bourgeois facade. But this did not discourage Jayaprakash from persisting in his efforts to bring

²⁸Jayaprakash Naryan; "Presidential Address at the Bengal CSP Conference (1935), *Towards Struggle: Selected Manifestoes, Speeches and Writings* (ed) Yusuf Meherally, Padma Publications, Bombay, 1946, p 130.

²⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Issue before and After Lucknow," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, p 5.

³⁰Madhu Limaye, *Communist Party : Facts and Fiction*; Chetna Prakashan, Hyderabad, 1951, pp. 21-22, 24.

about unity in the ranks of the left forces. He made a pointed reference to this in his presidential address to the Bengal CSP conference in 1935: "I firmly believe that unless there is a fusion of the forces which I have mentioned (Royists or followers of M N Roy and Communists), our common objectives will remain unrealised. I...exhort you to develop the greatest possible cooperation with the groups that are, except for minor differences, working for the same object as ourselves... I entreat them to work together in the promotion of identical ideals, keeping in mind the day we shall all come closer and merge into one organisation."³¹

Initially, the Royists, who constituted a prominent group of Marxists at that time, extended support to CSP. They had their reasons for doing so. Roy believed that CSP might emerge as "the rallying ground of the radical elements of the de-classed intellectuals—the elements objectively heading toward the party of the proletariat." Subsequently Roy, much as Jayaprakash was enamoured of his political sagacity, came to the conclusion that CSP was no more than a "vague, heterogeneous radical tendency in the national movement."

Therefore, "he directed his followers to join CSP with the object, contrary to Jayaprakash's expectation, not of merging with it, but of splitting it and absorbing the 'real proletarian elements'."³² In keeping with this line the Royists laboured hard to rupture relations with CSP. Jayaprakash had every reason to be bitter about this, for he was the party's most committed champion of left unity.

After the break with the Royists, he was heard to complain that "the basic difficulty in the path of unity was the ridiculous idea held by every miserable little party that it alone was the real Marxist party, and that every other party had therefore to be exploited, captured or destroyed. The Roy group was also a votary of this inflated creed. It was natural for it therefore to consider the development of another socialist party as unnecessary

³¹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Presidential Address", etc, *op cit*, pp 134-135.

³²Haithcox, *op cit*, pp 230-231.

and harmful."³³

Nonetheless, Jayaprakash could be said to have succeeded to an extent in his pursuit of left unity after the 1935 Moscow meet of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern. Alarmed at the rapid consolidation of the Nazi regime in Germany, the Comintern made a sharp departure in policy and advocated "the creation of an anti-fascist peace front of all 'democratic and peaceloving' countries and an anti-fascist people's front of all 'democratic parties' in each country."

According to the report on the anti-imperialist movements in the colonies and semicolonies which Wang Ming (the principal Chinese delegate) submitted and the Seventh Congress accepted, "our comrades in India have suffered for a long time from 'left' sectarian errors; they did not participate in all the mass demonstrations organised by the National Congress of organisations affiliated with it.... By their sectarian policy and isolation from the mass anti-imperialist movement, these small communist groups objectively helped to retain the influence of Gandhism and national reformism over the masses."

More, Rajani Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, the two most notable leaders of the British Communist Party, observed in an "open letter to Indian patriots": "Every Indian patriot will recognise that the first need for the powerful advance of the Indian national movement, the key need of the present situation, is the unity of all anti-imperialist forces in the common struggle. The National Congress can play a great part and a foremost part in the work of realising the anti-imperialist people's front. It is even possible that the National Congress, by the further transformation of its organisation and programme may become the form of realisation of the anti-imperialist people's front...it is essential that all left wing elements in Congress should fight in union on a common platform for these vital needs. The Congress Socialist Party can play an important part in this as the grouping of all the radical elements in

³³Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialist Unity and the Congress Socialist Party*, Sind Congress Socialist Group, Pharmacy Printing Press, Karachi, (no date), p 5.

the existing Congress.³⁴

As for Jayaprakash's reaction to this, let him speak for himself: "The popular front policy had its echo in India in CPI's own dutiful *volte face* and its sudden recognition and support...of the Indian National Congress as a national front. Still wedded to Marxism, this new policy filled my heart with joy and sent my hopes rising high. I began to dream of the possibility of a united Socialist-Communist party and of the rapid strides that both the freedom movement and Indian socialism could make under such united leadership."³⁵

Largely because of Jayaprakash's sustained efforts, CSP and CPI agreed to open a two-way traffic in cooperation. But that did not turn out the blessing he longed for. Between 1936, when the Communists opted for unity with the Socialists, and 1939, when this unity broke down mostly because of CPI's anti-Congress line, CSP had to suffer much organisationally and otherwise. Jayaprakash's espousal of left unity at all costs had in it element of simplism. His commitment to Marxism and enthusiasm for unity got the better of his judgement, and he refused to heed the warnings of his non-Marxist colleagues such as Lohia, Patwardhan and Mehta that the compulsions of CPI's politics, not to speak of the international situation, would require it not to allow him to achieve his goal.

Jayaprakash's wishes were however temporarily fulfilled and friendly relations established between CPI and CSP with the Socialists' admitting a number of Communists into their party. But CSP-CPI unity proved to be of shorter duration than even St Luke's summer. Each for its own set of reasons, political and otherwise, acted in a manner that ensured the failure of the experiment. P. C. Joshi (general secretary of CPI) accused Jayaprakash of pandering to "left nationalism", of being "unable to unify the forces of struggle, unable to put up a successful resistance to

³⁴Madhu Limaye, *op cit*, pp 26-28.

³⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*; *op cit*; p 13.

right disruption."³⁶

On the other hand, in his "War Circular No 2" of 31 December 1939, Jayaprakash regretted that "owing to our anxiety for unity we have admitted a numbr of Communists (when I use the term Communist I mean members of CPI) into our party and they are openly...doing their best to undermine the CSP...the present policy of the Communists negates the whole basis and even objective of unity. It is grounded on their exaggerated estimation of their ability to crush CSP. Their leaders have openly boasted of crushing CSP."³⁷

A detailed analysis of the causes of failure of the unity experiment is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice to say that shortly after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in November 1941, the two parties became embroiled in bitter hostility. To CPI the "imperialist" Second World War was transformed into a "people's war," and it said that CSP, "which betrayed socialism at the beginning of the war and pursued a policy of opportunism and disruption and ended in the camp of Trotskyite traitors...must be treated by every honest Indian as the worst enemy of the nation and driven out of political life and exterminated."³⁸

As for the Socialists, the war did not cease to be anything but imperialist and the fight against the British must therefore be determinedly continued. A chastened Jayaprakash, the most ardent exponent of left unity, ruefully admitted that he had lost "faith in so-called left unity... If the left and socialist movement in India is to grow, it could do so not through the unsteady and uneasy combination of various groups, who even when combining must explain and justify their separate identities, who even while trying to work together must work to strengthen their respective organisations by fresh recruitment and partisan propaganda, but by the growth of the large, single party. I cannot conceive that there is any other party in

³⁶See appendix A for photocopy of P.C. Joshi's letter of 5 September 1939 to Jayaprakash.

³⁷See appendix B for photocopy of circular.

³⁸Madhu Limaye, *op cit*, pp 48-49.

India that can fill this role except the CSP."³⁹ Also, the left unity experiment had a far reaching effect on CSP's internal situation. Other things apart, it adversely affected relations between Jayaprakash and some of his senior colleagues, particularly Lohia, who was fast emerging as the theoretician of the party.

To sit in judgement on men and events who held the stage some four decades ago is indeed a delicate undertaking. There is always the possibility of the association of hindsight with any attempt, however dispassionate, to dissect the past. Efforts to build up a united front comprising CSP and CPI were from the outset destined to fail. Soviet Russia at that time was the only communist state, and the train of events after Lenin's death in 1924 had clearly shown that the major preoccupation of the Soviet leaders was to secure the country against every conceivable danger, internal as well as external. The idea of supporting universally revolutions elsewhere had been shelved. Defence of the Soviet state was given priority over every other consideration, and the Third International left no doubt about this.

This was the line the national communist parties, not excluding CPI, followed. On the other hand, CSP, though not antagonistic to the Soviet Union, was committed to the line that its first concern was to strengthen the national bourgeois-democratic struggle for liberation to the exclusion of everything else. As for Jayaprakash, his argument hinged on Lenin's classic dictum that "whenever there was a national movement in a colonial country against imperialism, however it might be under the influence of national capitalist, the communists should not sever their relationship with it." He was convinced that "Stalin had completely reversed it."⁴⁰

On the face of it, there was hardly any common meet-

³⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Letter to Freedom Fighters" *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol. 1, *op cit*, p 81.

⁴⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "Acharya Narendra Deva" translated from Hindi message, (ed) Chandra Shekhar, *Acharya Narendra Deva Commemoration Volume*, Centre for Applied Politics, New Delhi, 1978, p IX

ing ground between CPI and CSP. Most socialist leaders, Jayaprakash excepted, realised this early enough. Though a certain change, tactical to be sure, took place in CPI's posture after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, its basic policy remained unaltered.

The focus may now be briefly turned on the label of Marxism affixed to CSP. Some builders of the party, particularly Jayaprakash, had in the initial stage loudly declared themselves Marxists. It was generally recognised that Jayaprakash was the moving spirit behind the party's doing so. As Masani, his longtime friend and associate, put it, "the important issue about the character of the Congress Socialist Party—whether or not it was a Marxist party—and the question of its relations with the Communist Party...were discussed in private sessions of the Executive Committee...After considerable resistance on the part of Yusuf Meherally, myself and others, Jayaprakash managed to persuade the executive to agree that ours was a Marxist party."⁴¹

Carried away as Jayaprakash was by his idealistic faith in Marxism, he failed to recognise the basic contradictions in his approach to the questions of unity with CPI and relations with Congress. He still had miles to go before he would make a rightabout turn.

Elaborating the policy and programme CSP should adhere to, Jayaprakash said: "The Congress Socialist Party grew out of the experiences of the last two national struggles. It was formed...by such Congressmen as came to believe that a new orientation of the national movement had become necessary, a redefinition of its objectives and a revision of its methods. The initiative could be taken only by those who had theoretical grasp of the forces of our present society. These naturally were those Congressmen who had come under the influence of, and had accepted, Marxian socialism...The immediate task is to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation. For that it is necessary to

⁴¹Minoo Masani, *Bliss was it in that dawn....*, Arnold-Heinemann, New Delhi, 1977, p 89.

wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism.... The party's own programme must be Marxist, otherwise it will fail to fulfil its task and leadership. Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny. Party members must, therefore, fully understand the technique of revolution, the theory and practice of class struggle, the nature of the state and processes leading to a socialist society."⁴²

Jayaprakash's concept of Marxism, as we have already seen, had very little in common with the Marxism to which CPI subscribed. Recollecting years later why he differed from CPI in those days, he said in the course of his address to the Calcutta conference of the All India Humanist Association in December 1973: "It was the influence of [M N] Roy's writings, reinforced powerfully by Lenin's thesis on the role of communists in national-independence movements of the colonies, that kept me on my return to India in 1929 November from joining the underground Communist Party of India, which had by then come to submit meekly to Stalinist policy of isolationism and splitting not only of the nationalist movements but also of the world socialist and labour movements.... Instead I joined the Congress."

In that reminiscent mood, he further stated that "true to Roy's teachings [I] organised within a few years a socialist group within the Indian National Congress." And then came the confession that "looking back it was wrong, and also contrary to Roy's thinking, that I along with my cofounders of the Congress Socialist movement gave to our group the name and structure of a party."⁴³ Also, he admitted that his "difficulties with CPI thus marked the beginning of my ideological alienation from Soviet Russia itself, which to me was till then the paragon and exemplar

⁴²Jayaprakash Narayan, "CSP and Its Policy", *Towards Total Revolution* Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 1-2.

⁴³See Jayaprakash Narayan's inaugural address to All India Radical Humanist Association Conference, Calcutta, 29-30 December 1973.

of all communist virtues."⁴⁴

That was Jayaprakash's understanding of communism, Soviet Russia and the Indian communist party, on the basis of which he decided to join Congress after his return from America in 1929. How sharply this differs from his thinking on the matter barely five years later when he crossed swords with J C Kumarappa, a distinguished Gandhian economist, on the question of economic and political consequences of centralization and decentralization of production. In a stinging critique, published in 1935, on Kumarappa's understanding of the issue Jayaprakash said: "I wish to examine the Association⁴⁵ as representing a scheme of social reconstruction excelling even communism as Professor Kumarappa has claimed." Dismissing Kumarappa's contention that in both the communist and the capitalist systems "the real producer loses his identity and becomes merely tools in the hands of men at the top" and that both "have as their basis violence", Jayaprakash observed that "this view of Soviet society betrays...a complete misunderstanding of the basis of socialism...and the present trend of capitalist economy."

Again, said Jayaprakash, "Kumarappa talks of the real producer losing his identity and becoming a tool in the hands of the men at the top...This is true of capitalism; but to say that it is also true of the Soviet system is to display utter ignorance of the status of the Russian worker...It is not for nothing that the communists speak of the dictatorship of the Proletariat. The working class is the most privileged class in Russia...The peasant too has acquired a new status, second only to that of the worker himself...It is this sudden revolution in the position, rights, privileges of these two classes that has been responsible for the stability of the Soviet Government."

Referring to Kumarappa's charge that communism and violence were nothing if not Siamese Twins, Jayaprakash stated that "it is both true and untrue. It is not true in the sense Mr Kumarappa means it. He says: 'Both capita-

⁴⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, op cit, p 13.

⁴⁵All India Village Industries Association.

lism and Soviet communism have as their basis violence. The galley slaves are driven with a whip for speed and harmony in pulling together.' If this is the sense in which the Professor thinks there is violence in communism, he is entirely wrong... There is no violence in his [Russian worker's] life. But there is violence in a different sense, though personally I do not consider it to be violence [An astounding statement for Jayaprakash to make in 1935 when he had already joined Nehru and Congress having rejected the Soviet system as essentially rooted in violence]. The classes which under capitalism constituted the ruling class...are deliberately destroyed by force. It is not that they are physically exterminated. What is meant is that by legislation they are denuded of their wealth and power. Actual physical violence is only used when these classes organise counter-revolution... Then they are sent to prison or shot, in accordance with the laws of the land."

This however did not conclude Jayaprakash's defence of violence as practised by the communist. He further stated that "the claim of the communist is that he destroys the violence of the few over the many and establishes the violence of the many over the few. Capitalist property, apart from being theft, in the words of Proudhon [was Proudhon an acceptable authority to the Marxists?], is also constant violence. Under communism, at least this form of violence would cease."

That said, Jayaprakash held a strong brief for centralization of economic power and all that went with it. He emphasized that "it is wrong to conclude that centralization under all conditions means violence. Centralised production under social ownership and control, eradicates these evils; and, at the same time, by keeping the high productive forces intact and even developing them, it makes unlimited social progress possible... Decentralisation, while theoretically solving the problem of exploitation, is a reactionary step and also an illusory hope. It is reaction because it turns back the productive forces of society. It is illusory because not having a class basis it cannot materialise. Furthermore, it means lower standards of living for the people. It means scientific and cultural

reaction. It means medieval and rural outlook. It means military weakness."

As if this was not enough to clinch the argument, Jayaprakash categorically stated that "in a class society there can be no democracy at all. Only when classes have been abolished that democracy can function. The 'dictatorship' in Russia is far more democratic in reality than the so-called democracies of the West. It is a dictatorship of the many over the few, while the 'democracies' are dictatorship of the few over the many." He returned to the moot point to reassert that "the only development from the present economic stage is towards largescale production under social ownership; that such production would not only end exploitation and violence but would also raise human life and civilisation to an unprecedented level."⁴⁶

Contrast this with his equally vigorous, if not more insistent, plea years later for decentralisation of both economic and political power at all levels. In a speech at Calcutta University on 8 September 1952 he observed: "Economic reconstruction of a vast country...is a vast subject... And the mind turns to big industrial States for inspiration and guidance. But, for us neither capitalist America nor communist Russia can be a model, because conditions here are entirely different... Mechanisation of agriculture...and largescale industrialisation are ruled out for this country... For us, small and medium scale production must be the industrial norm."⁴⁷

Equally important was the question of decentralisation of political power, said he, if the socialist movement were not to run to waste. There was no room for two opinions that "diffusion of political and economic power and decentralisation of the political and economic structure are

⁴⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism versus the AIVIA* (All India Village Industries Association), The Indian Socialist Research Institute Tract No. 6, The Congress Socialist Publishing Co. Ltd, Bombay, 1935, pp 3, 9-15, 19-21, 26, 31, 34. (So far as my knowledge goes the only extant copy of this pamphlet is in the possession of Dr. Hari Dev Sharma, Head, Research and Publication, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.

⁴⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, "Problems of Economic Reconstruction", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 3, *op cit*, pp 73-74.

essential for the realisation of true socialism." Jayaprakash reiterated. According to him, if India's second five-year plan, which laid modest stress on basic industries, "succeeds, the country will be put, perhaps irrevocably, on a road leading not to a nonviolent social order but to its opposite."⁴⁸

Earlier still Jayaprakash had argued, in an article published sometime in 1952 in *Janata*, Socialist Party's mouthpiece, that "in Russia today there is not only heavy concentration of political but also of economic power. It is not that Stalinist dictatorship is merely political, its grip on economic life equally pervasive... Some people claim that the Soviet state has a progressive economic base, only the Stalinist dictatorship is parasitic. This is wrong characterization. The economic organisation of the Soviet state is the real basis of its dictatorship." And for a change he leaned on Lohia, who had all along maintained a consistent ideological stand, for support: "Lohia has correctly pointed out the irrelevance of both the capitalist and the communist systems to the situation in two-thirds of the world. He offers decentralisation of economic and political power as a solution... Lohia has given facts and inapplicability of mass production techniques to India."⁴⁹

Lohia's approach to the complex issue of the under-developed world's problem of poverty and of politics was radically different from that of Jayaprakash and it had been so almost since the formation of CSP. In his opinion "socialism in Asia, and perhaps all the world over must increasingly become the doctrine of maximum attainable equality through redivision of land and social ownership over industry. Its political structure must arise out of the decentralised state and it must seek its technological framework in the small machines."⁵⁰ This however would remain a pipedream unless socialists were prepared to "go beyond ...capitalism and beyond communism, if for no other rea-

⁴⁸Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Second Five-Year Plan", *ibid*, p 80.

⁴⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "New Doctrine", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, pp 219, 222-23.

⁵⁰Rammanohar Lohia, "An Asian Policy", *Aspects of Socialist Policy*, Socialist Party, Bombay, 1952, p 20.

son than that the techniques of mass production are inapplicable to two-thirds of the world."

Even in his salad days in CSP Lohia refused to be branded a Marxist. Throughout his political career it had been his belief, unlike Jayaprakash, that "communism wants to move history backwards and to repair the ravages of capitalism by imitating its ways of mass production. Socialism must know to move history forward."

Explaining why democratic socialism, whether in India or elsewhere, needs must do so Lohia said: "Man is no longer at peace with himself. He must move away from existing civilisation in both its aspects of capitalism and communism." This is absolutely necessary because, Lohia emphasized, "their [capitalism and communism] kindred qualities and drives have made them both equally irrelevant to the venture into a new civilisation."⁵¹

Again, in another context, Lohia stated that "the scientific and economic problems in India, as in all underdeveloped economics, are more stubborn than what a mere transplanting of Western methods of manufacture would occasion... Capitalism and communism both rely on centralisation of political and economic power and technology of large unit machinery. Both therefore are irrelevant to the existing situation... Any system that believes in centralisation of political and economic power, rationalization of industry and agriculture and believes in technology of large unit machinery must fail with disastrous consequences in our country."⁵²

Were the early socialists, as some of them resolutely maintained, committed to Marxism in the sense this is generally understood? The answer could not plausibly be in the affirmative if viewed objectively. Ideologically speaking, the founders of CSP were social democrats, not necessarily of the West European variety. It would be stretching the argument too far to suggest that the party's theoretical orientation contained something more substantial than certain Marxist overtones. Marxism, after

⁵¹Lohia, "The Doctrinal Foundation of Socialism", *ibid.*, p 40, 46.

⁵²Rammanohar Lohia, *On the Move*, Progressive Publishing House, New Delhi, 1951, pp 2-3.

all, is a rigid system whose logic necessarily leads to a political society the structure of which would not rest on a multiparty system of politics.

It deserves to be repeated that the concept of pluralist democracy, (as the term is used in non-Marxist parlance) to which even the ardent Marxist Jayaprakash subscribed, is not compatible with Marxism. In any event, it was not at the time the present study is concerned with. The socialists never spelt out their political philosophy in terms of the dictatorship of the proletariat, perhaps except Jayaprakash who briefly identified himself with it, and the one-party state which are inseparable parts of the Marxian system of polity.

A point of clarification. The criterion used here is what was relevant to the period under discussion. It is generally agreed that the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat was then regarded as an essential aspect of Marxism and that a communist policy needs must be conterminous with a one-party state, the party being that of the proletariat.

It would defeat our purpose should we judge the situation prevailing at that time in terms of present conditions. When, in a vastly changed context, variants of Marxism are not only not inconceivable but communist parties in some countries could abjure the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat and affirm their faith in pluralism of the non-Marxist variety and yet retain their title to Marxism.

If things are seen in their right perspective, only a communist party could at that time qualify to be characterised as Marxist, although some communists might not. But it would be fatuous for a non-communist to wear the label of Marxism. To accept some aspects of Marxism and reject certain others, as CSP was supposed to have done, would be a contradiction in terms. Such an ideological mix would cut at the foundation of Marxian reasoning.

In the 1930s, India had a Communist Party, good or bad, that did put its trust in the whole of Marxism. Because of incomplete understanding of Marxism and the appeal the names of Marx and Lenin had for the articulate intelligentsia, which was fast being drawn to it and had a vague yearning for radicalism, some early socialists, notably Jayaprakash talked of Marxism. The fact is that the socia-

lists were militant nationalists ideologically committed to a social democratic polity. This in reality did not conflict with the conventional concept of democracy. Unlike the Marxists, the socialists, at no point, theoretically at any rate, ceased to be exercised about the question of political pluralism or that of ends and means.

Before proceeding further, we might appraise the attitude Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose adopted toward CSP, and Jayaprakash's relations with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, in that order. By common consent, Nehru and Bose were identified with radical nationalism, in fact were generally looked on as the most devoted champions of "leftism" in Congress.

In his presidential address to "the conference of the Bharat Nau Jawan Sabha (which held its conference simultaneously with the Congress session at Karachi in 1931), Bose dwelt at length on the necessity of 'socialism' in the country...he declared that the policy and programme of Congress was essentially based on the concept of class collaboration and, therefore, totally inadequate for activating 'the revolutionary elements in society which alone can win freedom'."⁵³ On and off, he talked in terms of leftism, socialism and so on. It was only natural for the fledgling CSP to expect his support.

Not long after the formation of the party, Bose stated that "it appears that the Congress Socialist Party has offered a platform not only to those who are socialists by conviction, but also to those who are dissatisfied with the Congress policy of council entry. It is unfortunate that the opposition to council entry came from the Socialist Party, because there is nothing anti-socialist in fighting within the legislatures, if such a policy is otherwise deemed expedient. But it may be that the Socialist Party, representing some of the radical forces in the Congress, instinctively felt called upon to oppose a party that had rallied all the moderate element... Though the Congress Socialist Party has, in some respects been harking back to the ideas and shibboleths that were popular 40 or 50

⁵³Bhola Chatterji, *Aspects of Bengal Politics in the Early Nineteen-Thirties*, World Press, Calcutta, 1969, p 11.

years ago, it does stand for a radical tendency in the nationalist movement and the formation of such a party is a very hopeful feature of the times."⁵⁴

This was not greatly comforting to the party. The council entry proposal, which the resurrected Swarajya Party had with Gandhi's support pushed through at the Patna session of AICC in May 1934, was anathema to the socialists. They did not pull their punches in opposing it. Nor did the socialists have reason to appreciate Bose's comments on the following observation Nehru had made on 18 December 1933: "I do believe that fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of communism and some form of fascism, and I am all for the former, that is communism."⁵⁵

This prompted Bose to say that "the view...is...fundamentally wrong. Unless we are at the end of the process of evolution or unless we deny evolution altogether, there is no reason to hold that our choice is restricted to two alternatives... Considering everything, one is inclined to hold that the next phase in world history will produce a synthesis between communism and fascism. And will it be a surprise if that synthesis is produced in India?"⁵⁶

Neither Subhas's ideological prescription nor his attitude towards Nehru found favour in CSP's eyes. The party nevertheless made efforts to maintain communication with Bose with a view to enlisting his support. For instance, soon after it decided to broach the idea of establishing a socialist book club Jayaprakash got in touch with him, as is evident from his letter to Bose: "Sometime back I wrote to you about the socialist book club which we wish to organise... We should like to know if you would agree to be a foundation member of the club and also a member of its advisory council.... Your association with the club would be of tremendous value to us."

Jayaprakash added that he had "also cabled to Jawaharlal for his consent to the foundation membership. I regret

⁵⁴Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1934*, Netaji Publishing Society, Calcutta, 1948; pp 371-72.

⁵⁵Quoted in Subhas Chandra Bose, *ibid*, p 430.

⁵⁶*ibid*, p 430.

to say that he has declined our request because he says he does not know well what the scheme is like. I have sent him a copy by air-mail, but I don't know what he will decide. I hope his decision will in no way influence your own and you will agree to our earnest proposal."⁵⁷

As is evident from another letter Jayaprakash wrote in November 1938 to Nehru, who was then vacationing in Europe and whom he addressed a Bhai (brother), Bose agreed to extend a helping hand. But Nehru did not accede to his request.

The letter, which is of some help in understanding the relations between Nehru and Jayaprakash, said: "I hasten to add my welcome to that of the nation to you on your homecoming... I hope that having been in the midst of tremendous happenings you have not forgotten the small affair of the socialist book club of which I wrote to you. We have been able to make some progress with our scheme, and with the help of Subhas Babu we were able to raise about Rs 3000 for it at Calcutta.... The club is a non-party affair. In the letter you wrote from Europe you expressed your inability to join the club as a foundation member till you had occasion to know more about it. You had also expressed your reluctance to identify yourself with any group. As I have said, the club is not a group affair.... Subhas Babu is already a foundation member of the club. Your refusal to join it would be a great blow to us.... it would be unfair of you, who are naturally used to doing things on a grand scale, to noncooperate with the efforts of socialists in India just because they are puny... We are, I think, not unjustified in expecting that, if you will not fully identify yourself with us, you will, as a socialist, at least help us in doing well the little we may undertake to do."⁵⁸

The suppliant attitude that the letter expressed was not

⁵⁷See appendix C for photocopy of the letter, the original of which is in the custody of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

⁵⁸*A Bunch of Old Letters*: Written mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and some written by him, Asia Publishing House, London, first British edition 1960, pp 304-305.

an isolated instance that occurred in the nearly three-decade-long relationship between Nehru and Jayaprakash. Future events would however bear out that Nehru's non-compliance with his request did not apparently have any impact on Jayaprakash.

On the other hand, CSP never thought much of Bose's concept of socialism. True, even as late as 1938 CSP's attitude to him was one of sweet reasonableness. It did not fail to notice that "Bose has in his address to the Congress session at Haripura declared his belief in socialism." The socialists readily admitted that they were "happy that a socialist and a friend of our party is at the helm of the country's affairs."⁵⁹ The attitude subsequently changed as it became clear that Bose had little patience with CSP's scheme of politics. Another important factor the party was loath to ignore and which considerably influenced its thinking was his increasingly combative stance regarding Gandhi.

To illustrate the point, reference might be made to Narendra Deva's comments on Bose's statement, made at the time he sought re-election as Congress president in January 1939, accusing the Congress leaders of holding compromise talks with the British. The socialist leader did not elect to be amiable when he said that "it is difficult to grasp the theory that underlies the activities of Subhas Chandra Bose. He talks of an immediate struggle and does all that lies in his power to make it difficult... If one were to believe him, the greater obstacle today is the present leadership of the Congress and not British imperialism. He openly talks of two Congress and of fighting this leadership with a new *swarajist* programme. The method he is pursuing will not stop compromise but create conditions favourable to it."⁶⁰

This notwithstanding, CSP supported Bose, as it did in 1938, when he decided to offer himself as a candidate once again for the presidency of Congress in 1939. But the situ-

⁵⁹M.R. Masani, *Chairman's Address: All India Congress Socialist Party. Fourth Annual Conference, 1938*, Bombay, 1938, p 1.

⁶⁰Narendra Deva, "The Indian Struggle (1940)," *Socialism and the National Revolution*, op cit; p 32.

ation completely changed when he was elected for a second term, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who enjoyed Gandhi's confidence. His re-election stung Gandhi to the quick, so much so that he "came out with the historic statement that the defeat of Subhas's rival was his own defeat."⁶¹ The established leadership of Congress was determined to clip Bose's wings.

With the introduction of a tricky resolution by Govind Ballabh Pant, the purpose of which was to put Bose on the spot, the Tripuri session of Congress in March 1939 promised trouble without end. According to Pant's resolution, adopted at the open session of Congress in March 1939, Congress "declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of the opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in the future. The committee expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year and deplores that any aspersions should have been cast against [sic] any of its members.

"In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the committee regards it as imperative that the Congress executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate [the] Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji."⁶²

The confrontation was between Gandhi and Bose. Gandhi, whose saintliness did not preclude him from practising *Realpolitik*, would not accept anything short of Bose's total defeat. The methods his disciples adopted to effect this were certainly not determined by political ethics. Gandhi triumphed at Tripuri, though he was not physically present, being away in the then princely state

⁶¹Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol 2 (1935-1947), Padma Publication, Bombay, 1947, p 108

⁶²Quoted in Sitaramayya, *ibid*, p 110.

of Rajkot. Along with others, not excluding Nehru, the socialists stood by Gandhi. CSP denied Bose the support that might have turned the scale in his favour.

The Gandhi-Bose conflict was not a sudden development but a lingering story. So early as 1929, at the Lahore session of Congress, Bose crossed swords with Gandhi. Countering Gandhi's main political thesis, he moved a resolution stressing the need to set up a "parallel government." As he put it, "I feel that his [Gandhi's] programme is not such as would carry us to the goal of complete independence... I cannot see how we can reach our goal except by setting up a parallel government... The example of the Sinn Feinners is a case in point." Defending his proposition, Gandhi said: "I consider that the resolution of the Congress Working Committee takes the largest possible step that can be conceived of and one step more would be a pitfall." He told the delegates that if they did "not agree, if you believe that you are ripe to establish a parallel government reject my resolution and carry Subhas Babu's resolution."⁶³ Of course Gandhi had his way.

Shepherded by party general secretary Jayaprakash, the socialists decided that "though the Congress Socialist Party has stood for definite national policies and programmes and advocated them within the Congress and worked otherwise to further and fulfil them, it has always resisted division of the Congress into warring or even rival groups. While the party has attempted to bring round to its views as large a section of Congressmen as possible, its aim has always been to take with it the whole Congress and not only a wing of it. Pursuant to this policy, even during the presidential election, leading members of the party, including its general secretary, made it clear, while supporting Subhas Babu, that he was not a candidate of the left and that there was no question of left and right involved in the election.

Consequently, when the success of Subhas Babu has given rise to the apprehension that Mahatma Gandhi and some of the foremost leaders of the country might with-

⁶³ *Liberty*, Calcutta, 1 January 1930.

draw their cooperation with the president, the party cannot but look upon it with the gravest concern... The party supported the candidature of Shri Subhas Chandra Bose because it considered him to be an eminently suited candidate and because there has been a large measure of agreement on political questions between him and the party...now that a grave situation has arisen, whatever its causes may be, the Executive [Committee] emphatically feels that no effort should be spared to maintain that unity... The Executive assures the president and Mahatma Gandhi of the fullest support of the party in maintaining this unit."⁶⁴

Accordingly, socialist (also Communist) delegates abstained from voting on the Pant resolution, which was passed by a massive majority. The resultant situation had all the trappings of a tragicomedy. Gandhi struck an unrelenting posture. For all practical purposes, his was an either-or solution to the issue Pant's formula had touched off. This closed all Bose's options except that of resignation from the presidency. CSP advised him against it, but that did not detract from the fact that "the key of Bose's defeat was the abstention of the Congress Socialists."⁶⁵

The upshot was that the party had to face the accusation that it had surrendered to Gandhi, that its abstention was another name for "tailism to Gandhism," as Charu Banerji, a leading Bengal socialist, put it in his letter, dated 16 April 1939, to Jayaprakash.⁶⁶

Jayaprakash's argument was that the national struggle had reached a critical stage and nothing should, therefore, be done to split the national platform that Congress was. What had to be noted, as he saw it, was that "the effective leadership of Congress is in the hands of

⁶⁴The original of the resolution along with other private papers of Jayaprakash Narayan, are in the custody of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Also see *Tribune* (Lahore) 13 March, 1939.

⁶⁵Michael Brecher, *Nehru : A Political Biography*, OUP, 1959, p 250.

⁶⁶The original letter is the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

Gandhiji.... If a national struggle as opposed to sectional, functional or partial can be launched by Mahatma Gandhi alone, it is suicidal to fight him. It is necessary to lend him our fullest cooperation."⁶⁷ His resolute support to Gandhi's leadership might momentarily baffle those who had not quite forgotten his earlier assessment of Gandhi. A confirmed Marxist, Jayaprakash had not only no use for Gandhism, he considered him a retrogressive force in Indian politics. At the time he plunged into Congress politics as Nehru's protege, Jayaprakash gave every indication that his political line was diametrically opposed to that of Gandhi. Even three years before the Tripuri Congress session he lambasted Gandhi in no uncertain terms.

His reason for rejecting Gandhi's thoughts and ideas was that "there is nothing new or peculiarly Indian in what Gandhiji says. A large number of Western writers have expressed themselves in a more or less similar strain... Class struggle is silly; capital and labour are interdependent and necessary for each other; revolution is wasteful; a synthesis of the contending forces of society is a higher ideal than revolution; enlightened control of profits, wages and prices; the theory of trusteeship—these are the commonest ideas of the West preached by smug bourgeois professors, thinkers and churchmen"⁶⁸.... Gandhiji's views are essentially what in socialist history is known as reformism... Reformism is interested not in securing social justice but in covering up the ugly fissures of society."

He used still harsher words before he sized up Gandhi. "By not questioning the right of the prince, landlord and capitalist to continue their functions." Jayaprakash was convinced, "Gandhiji has signified his tacit approval of this large-scale, organised theft and violence. Nay, the

⁶⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, "Gandhiji's Leadership and the CSP (1940)," *Towards Struggle: Selected Manifestoes, Speeches and Writings*, op cit, pp 140-41.

⁶⁸Interestingly, some two decades later Jayaprakash upheld almost similar viewpoints, We shall come to that at the appropriate place,

approach is not tacit; it is open and avowed." This explained why, he emphasized, "Gandhiji's views have found ready and welcome acceptance among the upper classes...there are some amongst them who are their most eloquent defenders."

After all, Jayaprakash further remarked, "the acceptance of this philosophy costs them nothing except perhaps an occasional donation to a public cause, the amount of which they soon recover either by virtue of the publicity gained or by a business manoeuvre. At the same time, the philosophy strengthens their position a great deal by giving it a moral sanction."

That said, Jayaprakash lodged a caveat: "Gandhism may be a well-intentioned doctrine. I personally think it is. But even with the best of intentions it is, I must admit, although it gives me no pleasure to do so, a dangerous doctrine. It is dangerous because it hushes up real issues and sets out to remove the evils of society. It thus deceives the masses and encourages the upper classes to continue their domination."⁶⁹

Another instance may be cited. CSP was opposed to the Government of India Act, 1935,⁷⁰ which was slated to become operative as of April 1937. The 1935 Act was supposed to pave the way for "responsible government" in the British Indian provinces and "the framework for a loose all-India federation of the provinces and as many of the six hundred-odd princely States as wished to join."⁷¹ If the rhetoric is ignored, the 1935 Act was a fancy contraption that few intelligent observers, including some Englishmen, disputed. A distinguished British expert on India's constitutional history, A B Keith, observed that "it is difficult to resist the impression that either responsible government should have been frankly declared impossible or the reality conceded... For the federal

⁶⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, *Why Socialism*, The All India Congress Socialist Party, Banaras, 1936, pp 84-95, 87, 89-90, 93, 111.

⁷⁰An amended version of the 1935 Act became the basis of free India's Constitution until it was replaced by a republican Constitution the Constituent Assembly drafted.

⁷¹Brecher, *op cit*; p 215.

scheme it is difficult to feel any satisfaction...it is too obvious that on the British side the scheme is favoured in order to provide an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India... It is difficult to deny the justice of the contention in India that federation was largely evoked by the desire to evade the issue of extending responsible government to the central government of British India. Moreover, the withholding of defence and external affairs from federal control, inevitable as the course is, renders the alleged concession of responsibility all but meaningless."⁷²

There were of course no dearth of takers among Congressmen whose dyed-in-the-wool conservatism and hunger for power made them oblivious of the horrendous nature of the British scheme. Although Nehru was not opposed "in principle to contesting the elections", he objected to "acceptance of office," which the Act provided for. In his presidential address to the April 1936 Lucknow session of Congress he described the 1935 Act as a "new charter of slavery." This, Nehru said, was meant to "strengthen the bonds of imperialist domination and to intensify the exploitation of our masses."⁷³

Both at the Lucknow Congress session in 1936 and at the Faizpur session the same year, Jayaprakash strove hard to extract from the Congress leadership an advance commitment not to accept office under the 1935 Act. He did not succeed. CSP's initial objection to the 1935 Act notwithstanding, it subsequently "shifted its position from opposition to the contesting of elections to opposition to the formation of ministries."⁷⁴

Nehru's favourable attitude was one of the several considerations which influenced CSP in deciding to participate in the elections. Several leading socialists, including Narendra Deva, were put up as candidates. The idea was that Nehru, still regarded as the symbol of radicalism in Congress, should be given all support as he alone could

⁷²Quoted in Brecher, *ibid*, p 216

⁷³Quoted in *ibid*, p 222.

⁷⁴Haithcox, *op cit*, p 272.

become the focus of a left alternative to Congress.

That Jayaprakash had more or less this in mind could be gleaned from what he said in 1935: "We should work rather with the object of bringing the anti-imperialist elements under our ideological influence through propaganda and work among the masses, so that finally they come to accept a proper anti-imperialist programme. I am not saying that by working in this manner we shall win the right wing to our programme and thus 'convert' Congress. Congress, as it is constituted at present cannot hold together very long. The more successful we are in pushing our programme, the nearer the day when a split will occur in it."⁷⁵

In all seriousness, Jayaprakash took to electioneering. Recalling his experience of "the election campaign in Bihar," he observed in an article in the 6 February 1937, issue of *Congress Socialist* that it "began in right earnest after the visit of the stormy Pandit Nehru... He shook up the whole province as nothing else had done in the recent past, as if a giant had picked up the sleeping province in his hands and brought it to life and consciousness... The response and enthusiasm of the people have been a revelation to us. And such touching faith in the Congress... The Congress is their hope—it will relieve them of their distress, this march of the hungry peasant to the polling booth is prelude to the march to the battle-field."

He had no doubt that "it was Jawaharlal's visit that revolutionised the campaign generally and a new tone was given to it."⁷⁶ Therefore it was imperative that CSP's strategy should simultaneously free Congress from its dross and give more power to Nehru's elbow.

No matter how determinedly CSP might oppose office acceptance after the Congress success at the polls, it cut no ice with the architects of national politics. Congress formed governments in seven out of 11 British Indian provinces, thanks to Gandhi's shrewd direction and the British Government's policy not to oppose him. The

⁷⁵Narayan, *Towards Struggle* etc., *op cit*, p 131.

⁷⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Political Earthquake in Bihar", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, p 31.

Congress old guard managed to secure for their office acceptance scheme formal approval in March 1937.

Nehru fell into line with the dominant viewpoint. He dared not risk Gandhi's displeasure, other considerations apart. Jayaprakash tenaciously tried to push the party's non-acceptance of office programme, but his amendment to that effect to the official resolution (supporting office acceptance) at the AICC meeting was lost by 135 votes to 78.

Between CSP and the Congress ministries, there was no love lost in the initial stages. The conflict between the two at times was indeed bitter. In Bihar, for instance, clashes between the socialists and the Congress ministry occurred quite early on a number of issues. One issue was agrarian policy, which was heavily weighted in favour of the landlord. The socialists took up the cause of the peasantry and agitated for radical agrarian reforms. The Bihar Congress Committee, dominated by landed interests, was touched to the quick and "decided to take action against those Congressmen who had been associated with the Kisan [peasant] demonstrations." Refusing to be browbeaten into submission, Jayaprakash said: "If the Congress authorities were to be so unwise as to take disciplinary action, the Kisan Sabhites⁷⁷ would have to part company with the Congress, just as Lokmanya Tilak⁷⁸ had to in the past." What exacerbated feelings was the Congress Working Committee's endorsement of the Bihar Congress' decision. This promptly roused Jayaprakash to announce that "Gandhism had played its part. It cannot carry us further and hence we must march and be guided by the ideology of socialism. We may suffer political persecution at the hands of Congress and even be driven out of it, but a day will come when Congress will become ours."⁷⁹

⁷⁷Members of the Kisan Sabha, a peasant organisation which was largely CSP's handiwork. The Communists were also associated with it.

⁷⁸Bal Gangadhar Tilak, an extremist leader of the freedom struggle in the pre-Gandhian era.

⁷⁹Quoted in Hari Kishore Singh, *A History of the Praja Socialist Party*, Narendra Prakashan, Lucknow, 1959, pp 41-42.

But Jayaprakash's opposition to office acceptance and severely critical attitude towards Gandhi mellowed with the passage of time. After the 1938 Haripura Congress session with Subhas Bose as president, Jayaprakash clarified CSP's stand in regard to both the Congress ministries and Gandhi. In an article published in February 1938, he said that the socialists "were opposed to formation" of Congress ministries. "But after they came into existence," he observed, "we want them to fulfil the Congress programme, and as Congressmen we want to assist them in their task. Above all, we want them to be instruments for strengthening the Congress and the national movement. We do not want them to concentrate on constitutionalism, but to combat the constitution and to fulfil their share of the task of preparing the country for the struggle that is inevitable on the issue of federation."

He also recorded that "some of us have been hypercritical of the Congress ministries and have emphasised shortcomings and overlooked achievements"

In the course of that article, Jayaprakash also expressed his feeling that Gandhi was no longer the untouchable that he had been until recently. He said: "There are some comrades who believe that Gandhism and socialism are so fundamentally contradictory that it is impossible for their adherents to work together. It is true that there are fundamental contradictions between the two ideologies and I myself have so frequently drawn attention towards them. But as far as I am concerned there was, and is, no doubt in my mind that, apart from power politics, there is no reason why both groups cannot work in the closest cooperation possible. I believe further that both groups can march shoulder to shoulder as far as the final goal of independence."⁸⁰

This made people prick up their ears. It was noticed that the statement did not carry even a faint trace of the pungent anti-Gandhi rhetoric that until a few months earlier had been an inseparable item of Jayaprakash's ideological baggage. The defence of his not so "neutral"

⁸⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "Lessons of Haripura," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, op cit, 37-39.

stand—rather it heavily leaned towards Gandhi—on the Gandhi-Subhas dispute at the 1939 Tripuri Congress only confirmed that it was something more than a tactical ploy that had made him shift his ground. Yesterday's crusading Marxist had already come quite close to the man who was destined to die as the "Father of the Nation."

The change in Jayaprakash's thinking was not abrupt. It could not be traced to a solitary factor either. His growing disenchantment with Marxism; opposition from his non-Marxist party colleagues; concern about disunity in the nationalist ranks; the government's stiffening attitude towards the Congress ministries; deteriorating international situation; the influence of his wife Prabhavati, at once a friend of Nehru's wife Kamala and a devout Gandhian—these were some of the more important factors which moulded Jayaprakash's attitude towards men and events in this period.

CSP's concern over the worsening international scenario would be evident from the "draft thesis" prepared by Narendra Deva, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Achyut Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta for the fourth conference of the party at Lahore in 1938: "The international situation is becoming tenser. Wars are already raging in two corners of the world. The intensified imperialist rivalries and the continued decline of capitalism make a world war almost inevitable... On war...the Congress attitude is unambiguously militant. Our task is to realise the necessary organised strength for that militancy."⁸¹

The truth at last dawned on Jayaprakash that the "leftist" forces which opposed Gandhi were not necessarily his allies, that CSP could not in the given context move under its own steam and that Gandhi meant something more than just part of the Congress leadership. More important, Prabhavati, an active member of Gandhi's entourage at Wardha, formed a link between him and

⁸¹Narendra Deva, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Achyut Patwardhan and Ashok Mehta, *Draft Thesis for the Fourth Conference of the Congress Socialist Party 1938*, Bombay, 1938, pp 15-16.

Gandhi that could not be wished away. We shall have occasion to notice that Prabhavati, years later, was also a relatively important factor in influencing Jayaprakash's attitude to Indira Gandhi in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

A glance at some of the entries in the personal diary Prabhavati kept during her stay at Wardha is interesting: "26-8-1934: Wardha. Today I received a telegram from Jayaprakashji. He has called me to Patna immediately. Talked to Bapu about going. "8-10-1934: Wardha. Jayaprakash arrived. Today I feel very sad and worried... I Mayedti God. Give me peace... 9-10-1934: Wardha. Talked to Bapu. He explained to me clearly my duty. After that, I listened to Bapu and Jayaprakash talking, 14-10-1934: Wardha. I was decided that I shell stay at the ashram for a year under the change of Kakoji. He will give me twentyfive rupees. The ashram will pravide me board and lodging. In this way, I shell be able to stand on my own. After a year, I shell live with Jayaprakashji."

Let us now run our eyes through some of the letters Gandhi wrote to Prabhavati in this period. In a letter dated 19 May 1936, Gandhi told her, among other things, that he had "met Jayaprakash... He did not reply to the letter I wrote to him. I thought that he does not want to reply. We talked about your future. He wants you to learn the Montessori method at Kashi for three months and after that he would like you to go with him to Patna. He asked for my assent, which I promptly gave him. There is no harm in your learning about Montessori. I am not enamoured of it, but if it is his wish, then you should fulfil it. After that, you will stay in Patna or some such place, wn't you?" In another letter, dated 30 June 1936, Gandhi wrote: "I got all the news about Patna. It seems you are not fated to be with Jayaprakash and to look after him."⁸²

For an appreciation of Jayaprakash's relations with Prabhavati we may listen to what he has to say. Res-

⁸²Prabha Smitti, *Sarva Seva Sangh, Banaras, 1974, pp 122-23*

ponding to my request to talk about his wife in a taped interview on 21 April 1978, some seventeen and a half months before his death on 8 October 1979, he observed: "There was a peculiar kind of relationship between us. Soon after marriage I went to the United States and came back a confirmed Marxist. On the other hand, she went to Sabarmati Ashram and became Gandhiji's adopted daughter and a staunch devotee of Gandhiji and Gandhiji's philosophy.

"Naturally, there were differences between us, but the bond that was something more than merely the usual bond between a wife and a husband—it is difficult to describe that bond—kept us together, saw us through all kinds of internal struggles, external struggles. For instance, I had great difficulty in reconciling myself with the vow of celibacy, which she took, when I was in the United States. I was young, she was also young, and it was not easy."

"Where she certainly remained true to her word I can't claim the same. Whether it was sin or vice or whatever else I have had my falls from the ideal, deflection from the path. But because of the bond of love between us somehow she in the end came victorious and in that way over a long period of time she influenced me, she helped me to find myself to become what I am today. I can't forget the contribution she made to my making."

"I don't know what else you would like to know. I always feel rather hesitant to speak about personal matters, but because of your love and affection I shall try to answer your questions to the best of my ability, under these limitations that certain things I may not be able to express frankly. I will not be untrue, but I will not be forthcoming with certain information or experiences or whatever insights I gained during my life time."⁸³

Jayaprakash's observation has been quoted at length because, other considerations apart, it shows the man's

⁸³Author—Jayaprakash taped interview, *Sunday* (Calcutta), Vol 8, Issue 15, 25 June 1978, p 20. Also see Bhola Chatterji; *JP: Profile of a Non-Conformist*; Minerva Associates, Calcutta, 1979, pp 18-20.

true colours. Perhaps much more so than what volumes of investigative essays on him might do. Those few words speak well for his determination not to run away from himself, his sense of rectitude that would permit no detraction from the hard truth about himself and, above all, his adherence to the principle of self-criticism.

Prabhavati was a major influence in the relations between Jayaprakash and Gandhi. If the emotional content in his association with Gandhi is overlooked, the story of Jayaprakash would remain incomplete. It may be said that a certain ambivalence marked the relations between the two men for a good few years, that is, until Prabhavati returned to him after the Second World War. He was much too sophisticated to be enamoured of the ritualism, self-righteousness and the demonstrative cult of almost tormenting self-abnegation that governed life at Gandhi's ashram. Nor had he any reason to take delight in the old man's ensnaring influence on Prabhavati, who was indeed torn by divided loyalties, and which kept her away from Jayaprakash when he wanted her most with him. It is another story that his rigorous self-discipline, or shall we say stoicism, enabled him to keep the personal-emotional factor from clouding his judgement when impersonal matters were concerned. That was a difficult exercise, but he went through it.

The picture may be looked at from another angle. In spite of Jayaprakash's trenchant, at times vituperative, criticism, Gandhi did not put him in his black books. Astute politician that he was, Gandhi was never chary of acquiring friends and influencing people. His political entourage, as distinct from his company of constructive workers, consisted of disparate men who were not infrequently at loggerheads with one another. But Gandhi had use for everyone of them until he dared cross his path.

Jayaprakash never did that at the level of serious politics, whatever might have been his criticism of Gandhi on the theoretical plane. He disagreed with Gandhi now and again, but never really opposed him. As for Gandhi, the fact that Subhas Bose could not be road-broken and that Nehru, though loyal to him, at times strained at the

leash, made it imperative that Jayaprakash should not be written off. He could be a lever that Gandhi might use, as and when necessary, to countervail Nehru or to keep the Congress radicals in good humour. Reference in passing might be made to Gandhi's observation on Jayaprakash's arrest in February 1940. In a letter to the Viceroy of India, also published in *Harijan*, Gandhi said:

"The arrest of Shri JP is unfortunate. He is no ordinary worker. He is an authority on socialism. It may be said that what he does not know of Western socialism nobody else in India does. He is a fine fighter. He has forsaken all for the sake of the deliverance of his country. I do not know what speech has brought him within the law. But if...the highly artificial Sections of the Defence of India Act are to be inspanned for catching inconvenient persons, then any person whom the authorities want can be easily brought within the law... It is open to Government to precipitate a crisis if they wish to... Is this arrest a prearranged plan, or is it a blunder committed by an over-zealous officer? If it is the latter, it should be set right."⁸⁴

Let the matter rest here for the present. I propose now to scrutinise the relations between CSP, more appropriately Jayaprakash and Nehru.

In a taped interview in Patna in March 1978, I asked Jayaprakash: "What were your relations with Jawaharlal Nehru? Did he exert an influence on you, politically speaking?" Jayaprakash replied: "Well, for several years in the beginning my relations with Jawaharlal Nehru were like that of a younger brother with an elder. I can't think of anything specific that I learnt from him because I was quite a convinced Marxist then and I thought that he was not applying Marxism to the Indian situation. So there wasn't anything in the theoretical field that I got from him, but I must say that he gave me an opportunity to play some part during the freedom struggle from the central organisation when he brought me to the All-India Congress Committee office as secretary of the labour department."

⁸⁴The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi LXXI; 1978, p 322.

In answer to another question, "what were Nehru's plus points?" he observed: "I think there were two Nehrus—the pre-independence Nehru and the post-independence Nehru. Nehru in power, I think, was very different from Nehru the fighter for freedom. I knew the earlier Nehru, and I was very attracted by his complete selflessness. The way Motilal's son, brought up in affluent conditions, identified himself with the peasants of UP, to begin with and then the rest of the country, was greatly inspiring. He also had sympathy for industrial labour, but I don't think he would have made a labour leader. I don't think he had the narrow class vision that a labour leader requires."⁸⁵

On 19 December 1933 Masani, one of the early socialist ideologues, wrote to Nehru informing him of the decision to form a Congress Socialist group. In reply, Nehru said that "he welcomed 'the formation of Socialist groups in the Congress to influence the ideology of the Congress and the country'."⁸⁶ Well before CSP came into existence, Nehru had come to be known as a man of wide sympathies. The Congress radicals were persuaded of his faith in socialism, though not of a doctrinaire variety.

It was therefore not very surprising that the socialists, who congregated in Patna to give themselves a name and an ideology, should convey their "affectionate greetings" to Nehru, in prison then. The foundation conference of CSP also recorded "its sense of appreciation of his services to the socialist cause."⁸⁷

At that time the socialists counted him among their major allies. It was not unexpected that they should suggest Nehru for the presidentship of Congress at the Meerut Conference of CSP in January 1936. Jayaprakash moved the "resolution urging the election of Pandit Nehru as president [of Congress] for the ensuing session."⁸⁸ Supported by Yusuf Meherally, the resolution

⁸⁵*Sunday*, Vol 6; Issue 15, 25 June 1978, pp 23-24.

⁸⁶Masani, *Bliss was it in that Dawn op cit*, p 44.

⁸⁷Rose, *op cit*; p 19.

⁸⁸P.L. Lakhanpal; *History of the Congress Socialist Party*, National Publishers & Stationers, Lahore, 1946, p 64.

received the conference's unanimous approval. But Nehru was not in the least inclined to humour the nascent party. He staked a claim to something much bigger than what CSP could offer. Also, Gandhi, saw to it that he did not go over to the socialists.

After the Lucknow session of Congress in April 1936, Nehru, who had been elected president, appointed Narendra Deva, Achyut Patwardhan and Jayaprakash members of the Working Committee. He had several reasons for doing so, one of which doubtless was to have two strings to his bow. But he took care not to be misunderstood by the Congress leaders. He could not ignore the rude fact that Vallabhbhai Patel heartily disagreed with him on almost all important issues affecting party and country.

Patel seldom made any effort to conceal this. As a matter of fact, when withdrawing from the 1936 Congress presidential election which elected Nehru Congress president for the next year, Patel tersely reminded all concerned that his "withdrawal should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views Jawaharlalji stands for...on some vital matters my views are in conflict with those held by Jawaharlalji."⁸⁹

That the Nehru-Patel conflict also had impact on Jayaprakash's relations with Patel could not be disputed. The Sardar of Bardoli, the title Gandhi conferred on him for leading the no-tax movement of the Bardoli peasants in 1928, gave the socialists a wide berth as a matter of principle. At the Haripura Congress session in 1938, when Subhas was president, Patel came down heavily "on Jayaprakash and his group demanding their resignation." In language meant to hit the socialists where it hurt, he said: "Let me make it clear that we have tolerated you for two years, but the time has come when we shall no longer tolerate you. We shall now give it back to you in your own coin."⁹⁰

Even though Jayaprakash hurried to record after the Lucknow session of Congress that "Nehru has unequivocal

⁸⁹Quoted in Sitaramayya, *op cit*, p 32.

⁹⁰Quoted in Allan and Wedy Scarfe, *op cit*, p 105.

cally expressed himself in favour of socialism as the only effective solution of India's economic and social problems,"⁹¹ the man concerned preferred not to reciprocate by using the expected idioms. Eclectic as Nehru was, he stubbornly declined to have his ideological world fenced with a given system. He made it a point to get the message across that he did not intend to act as the spokesman of any particular group.

Mention might be made of the message Nehru sent, in response to Masani's request, to the Faizpur conference of CSP in December 1936. In the course of it he recalled that he was "vastly interested in the socialist approach to all questions. It is right that we should understand the theory underlying this approach." He hastened to add however that "two aspects of the question fill my own mind. One is how to apply this approach to Indian conditions, the other is how to speak of socialism in the language of India."

Having said this he reminded the socialists, who stressed Marxism frequently, that "it is often forgotten that if we are to be understood we must speak the language of the country... I am referring... to the language which grows from a complex of associations of past history and culture and present environment.

"So long as we do not speak in some language which has that Indian mentality for background, we lose a great measure of our effectiveness. Merely to use words and phrases, which may have meaning for us but which are not current coin among the masses of India, is often wasted effort. It is this problem of the approach to socialism that occupies my mind, how to interpret it in terms of India, how to reach the hearts of the people, with its hope-giving and inspiring message." And this was "a question" he wanted "a socialist to consider well."⁹²

Between such pleasantly vague ideological musings and Jayaprakash's theoretical formulations there was a wide gulf. Still, "despite his aloofness, the Congress so-

⁹¹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Issues before and after Lucknow," *Congress Socialist*; Vol 1, (New Series), No 22; 23 May 1936, p 7.

⁹²Quoted in Sitaramayya, *op cit*, p 15.

cialists continued to look to Jawaharlal for leadership and provided the main source of his support in the battles to follow."⁹³ To break off here does not necessarily mean that we have seen the last of the dialogue between the two men. We shall often have occasion to refer to this in subsequent chapters.

Relations between Jayaprakash and Vallabhbhai Patel may now be briefly surveyed. In his posthumously released unfinished "autobiography"⁹⁴ Jayaprakash ruminates on his close association with Patel and Nehru. After scrutinising what he considers their good and bad points, strengths and weaknesses, he sifts ashes from cinders and concludes: "It was India's good fortune that we had him [Patel] as our home minister I do not know if Jawaharlal Nehru without Sardar's support in the early years could have been able to achieve what everybody thought he did. But a great part of that achievement was Sardar's I do not know what would have happened if he had been prime minister. I wonder if India would have been divided. He would have found some way of keeping the country together without force. But Panditji [Nehru] had his own ways. He and Liaquat Ali Khan (the Muslim League representative in the interim government and later prime minister of Pakistan) were together, a deal was made, and the country was divided."

An astonishing revelation indeed. This would take by surprise even those who had kept track of Jayaprakash's five-decade-long tortuous course in politics. Others might be tempted to dismiss it as an instance of wisdom by hindsight. Yet others might look askance at the authenticity of the source from which it emanated. There is no dearth of evidence to prove that Jayaprakash had a rather low opinion of Patel's handling of the Home Ministry so long as the latter was alive.

It was also not beyond his knowledge that Patel

⁹³Brecher, *op cit*, p 219.

⁹⁴See *New Delhi* (New Delhi), Vol 3, Issue 13, November 24—December 7, 1980, Vol 3, Issue 14, December 8-21, 1980, Vol 3, Issue 15, December 22—January 4, 1981.

was no less responsible for the partition of India than any of his compeers. What a fairly knowledgeable political analyst says while commenting on the role V P Menon, Secretary to the Home Ministry, played in regard to the partition is worth reproducing in some detail: "Menon approached Patel even before the coming of Mountbatten with his own scheme for a solution. Division was the only way out of the impasse, he argued. The alternative was civil war

"As long as the Congress held out for a United India and complete separation from the Commonwealth, he declared, the Viceroy, then Lord Wavell, the civil and military services and London would support the [Muslim] League. Partition, with both India and Pakistan as dominions, would eliminate the League's preferred status with the British, would facilitate parliamentary approval of the transfer of power and would restore the Congress to the good graces of Delhi. And the Congress would achieve its goal of independence. Patel was impressed and indicated his approval. There the matter ended. Menon submitted his proposal to the India Office in London, but nobody took any notice.

"When Mountbatten arrived on the scene he was committed to the Cabinet Mission plan (Cripps's three-tier scheme) but soon decided that a united India was impossible. His next plan was to transfer power to the provinces. Menon proposed it to Nehru and met a blank wall. Finally, Menon persuaded the Viceroy to try his own scheme. The die was cast at Simla, where Menon succeeded in winning Nehru's approval. Nehru was unaware of Patel's prior consent. With their acceptance the Congress stood committed. Getting the plan through the Working Committee and the AICC was a formality."⁹⁵

What another socialist leader, Lohia, says in this regard may not be irrelevant. Talking of the meeting of the Congress Working Committee (both Jayaprakash and Lohia participated in this as invitees)" which accepted the scheme of partition," Lohia observes: "I should like espe-

⁹⁵Brecher, *op cit*, p 346.

cially to bring out two points that Gandhiji made at this meeting. He turned to Mr Nehru and Sardar Patel in mild complaint that they had not informed him of the scheme of partition before committing themselves to it... Mr Nehru and Sardar Patel had obviously between themselves decided that it would be best not to scare Gandhiji away before the deed [India's partition] was definitely resolved upon.... Messrs Nehru and Patel were offensively aggressive to Gandhiji at this meeting." And Lohia had reasons to believe that "Sardar Patel was an undoubtedly Hindu in his political motivations as Maulana Azad was Muslim."⁹⁶

If Lohia is not distorting history, which he presumably cannot be accused of, both Patel and Nehru had without Gandhi's prior knowledge committed themselves to partition. Jayaprakash's argument that Patel, given an opportunity, would have made a better prime minister and avoided the country's division is a rather warped understanding of the forces and factors leading to that tragedy. One might also recollect Patel's defence of the partition proposal at the 14-15 June 1947 session of AICC which confirmed the Working Committee's resolution accepting partition. While "Nehru spoke briefly" in support of it at the AICC conference, "Patel delivered the keynote address. He used the analogy of a diseased body and argued that if one's limb was poisoned it must be removed quickly lest the entire organism suffer irreparably."⁹⁷ There was nothing abstruse in his message and AICC took only two days to debate the issue and approve the dismemberment of the country.

Almost since CSP made its debut Patel seldom missed an opportunity to upbraid it with a fault, particularly its general secretary, Jayaprakash. In fact, skirmishes between Jayaprakash and Patel, now loud and harsh, now subdued, continued till the Sardar breathed his last.⁹⁸ The

⁹⁶Rammanohar Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1960, pp 10-12, 43.

⁹⁷Brecher; *op cit*, p 349.

⁹⁸See appendix D for photocopies of Jayaprakash-Vallabhbhai Patel correspondence.

Patel-Jayaprakash relations were a great contrast to the close affinity between Nehru and Jayaprakash. His dealings with Patel did not have an iota of the warmth, understanding and cordiality that marked his relations with Nehru. Patel of course had no patience with the social, political and economic ideas that enthused the socialists. Neither did he consider it prudent to let sleeping dogs lie.

Patel's world of thought was much too constricted to sustain the idealism with which men like Jayaprakash were animated. Nor was Patel accustomed to showing discretion when it came to the question of his conservative attitude to life. That such a man would as a matter of course reject the scheme of things which Jayaprakash espoused was hardly surprising.

Whenever the occasion arose they measured swords with each other. For instance, after the Haripura Congress session in February 1938, Jayaprakash said: "We have talked of united front and of solidarity in the ranks of the Congress. Yet, we were shocked to find how wide the gulf has become and how threatening for our cherished solidarity. We saw that even while we pledged our undivided support in the moment of crisis and action, there was suspicion, bitterness, hostility. Sardar Vallabhbhai's attack ... pointed to a much deeper estrangement than expected and signalled a bitter and determined fight that is bound to prove ruinous for the Congress."⁹⁹

Again, while discussing the reason why CSP should sever its link with Congress after the attainment of freedom, Jayaprakash pointed an accusing finger at Patel. As he put it, "only the other day Sardar Patel disparaged 'isms' and denounced the parrot cries of socialism...It is essential to remember that those who decry 'isms' have their own 'ism' nonetheless, only it is the 'ism' that is already reigning in society so that it does not have to be talked about. When Sardar Patel decries socialism, he is defending the status-quo, and is in effect saying that his 'ism,' namely, 'status-

⁹⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Lessons of Haripura," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*; p 36.

quoism,' is superior to all others."¹⁰⁰

Patel did not flinch living up to his reputation of being the Congress Party's toughest taskmaster. His correspondence with Jayaprakash would bear out that he could far excel his antagonist in hitting below the belt. As Home Minister in the Interim Government, which was in office immediately before India gained independence, Patel wrote to Jayaprakash, on 23 May 1947, accusing him of "spreading ... general disloyalty and indiscipline in the security services such as the police."

In the course of that rather long letter Patel sarcastically remarked: "I am glad to hear from you that you do not want to disrupt the Congress organisation, but you will excuse me if I am frank enough to say that your activities are fast leading certain Congress organisations to that end... I tried to forget the past, but you seem to keep your past impressions and experience alive. I am afraid if we meet with that background there is hardly any chance of any successful outcome of our discussions."¹⁰¹ The far from pleasant relations between these two persons were something that could not be laughed away. Everything else apart, the Patel-Jayaprakash clash of opinions and attitudes also affected CSP's internal politics.

For instance, Lohia believed that the animosity between Patel and Jayaprakash was a throwback of the longstanding Patel-Nehru conflict. Lohia and Jayaprakash were almost polar opposites in their attitude to men and affairs. From the beginning of their career in CSP, they more often differed than agreed on basic issues. Jayaprakash was drawn into the communist movement in the formative period of his political life, while Lohia's experience was altogether different.

His father, Hiralal, was a freedom fighter and devout follower of Gandhi. Lohia had his education in Germany when Nazism was riding the crest of the wave; when communists were fighting socialists with no holds barred, paving the way for the Nazis to take over. Communism did

¹⁰⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "Will the Socialists leave Congress?" *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *ibid*, p 76.

¹⁰¹See appendix G for photocopy of the letter.

not attract him. Rather his experience in Germany contributed later to his theoretical formulation that conservatism and communism had much in common and, therefore, democratic socialism must maintain equidistance from both.

As we have already noticed, after his return from the US Jayaprakash was closely identified with Nehru. So was Lohia at the outset of his political career. Those were halcyon days when Nehru and Lohia set their affections on each other, when Nehru appointed Lohia secretary of AICC's Foreign Department. Two of Lohia's monographs *The Struggle for Civil Liberties* and *India on China*,¹⁰² published in 1936 and 1938 respectively, carried a foreword by Nehru. In his foreword to *The Struggle for Civil Liberties*, Nehru says: "Dr Rammanohar Lohia has done well to prepare the pamphlet on the subject, to tell us what the concept of civil liberty is and how it has grown in Western countries. I hope that many will read it and that it will help us in combating the suppression of civil liberties here."¹⁰³ And Nehru's family residence, Anand Bhavan, extended quite often its hospitality to Lohia.

What Lohia thought of Nehru at the beginning of this relationship may be gleaned from this excerpt from one of the socialist leader's articles published in the late 1930s. In the course of it Lohia said: "Jawaharlal Nehru... during the last two years...had easily been the first favourite of the Indian press and the second lags far behind... the thought of what the country was before Jawaharlal mounted the nation's tribune at Lucknow in April 1936 flashes across the mind.

"There was confusion in the national ranks, after the heroic civil disobedience movements, 1930-33, and mass arrests and repression. The country had not yet been able to set its fractured spine, though it was unmistakably attempting to do so.... During Jawaharlal's presidency,

¹⁰²Rammanohar Lohia, *India on China* with a foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru, All India Congress Committee, Allahabad, 1938.

¹⁰³Rammanohar Lohia, *The Struggle for Civil Liberties* with a foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru, Foreign Department, All India Congress Committee, Allahabad, 1936.

all traces of the fracture have been effaced and the nation's spirit has acquired a dynamic life. It would of course be foolish to credit it all to President Nehru and to think of him as a magician with a wand. The masses were ready and the country was agitating to throw off its confusion and its impotence

"President Nehru proved a vigorous pilot. His propaganda touched the masses His clarification of many major national issues swept away the confusion and gave the nation a clear and vigorous mind The president has talked straight to the masses of their poverty and hunger and their cultural degradation. He has shown them the way to lift themselves up. This is the way of clear thinking and feeling and of organised peaceful action President Nehru's first achievement is, therefore, the infusion of a vigorous spirit of national freedom in the Indian people.

"Jawaharlal Nehru's second achievement is the formulation of a Congress mass contact policy and its pursuit with vigour The mass contacts policy was intended, internally, to broadbase the Congress organisation and to democratise it, and, externally, to affiliate other anti-imperialist organisations with the Congress.

"President Nehru's third achievement is a clearer outline of the Congress agrarian programme and a vigorous agitation among the masses on its basis. The agrarian programme has already become the focal point for the organisation of vast peasant masses within the Congress fold President Nehru has made a great effort in linking up what is happening in India with what is happening in the outside world ... the Indian people ... are rapidly realising the international context within which the British Empire works its way to profit and India strikes for freedom. The history of twentythree years ago will not repeat itself. The British Empire will not, in its wars, be able to count on Indian assistance in men or money. This is Nehru's fourth achievement.

"When has he failed? It is difficult for me to answer that question. Forty years separate me from Mahatma Gandhi and only twenty from Jawaharlal Nehru and, while Gan-

dhiji has already become history to me which I may equally revere and criticise, Nehru is still a living ideal My generation admires his faults."

"Jawaharlal appears at times to live a hand-to-mouth existence in politics. He has the final goal crystal clear before him and he seems to possess an uncanny instinct for the immediate stages. What does Jawaharlal think of the content and form of the next struggle?" And the question that Lohia proposed to raise in this context was that of Nehru's "prevision of the next struggle for freedom and, with it, of the relation between the two dominant methods of Gandhism and socialism. If India is not to waste her strength in ineffectiveness or in a conflict that is unnecessary, Jawaharlal Nehru must answer the question and describe the relation, and he alone can do it."¹⁰⁴

Their friendship did not however last long. The warmth evaporated soon after India became free. Subsequently, Lohia convinced himself that Nehru alone was responsible for all that had gone wrong with the country, and much indeed was amiss with it. Calling him a "quick-change artist," Lohia said: "Mr Nehru ... knows better than anyone else in the country to promote his personal interests and those of his relations and friends as well as how to pursue a foe to his ruin. He can command a finesse to obscure his greed and his vendetta that the others do not possess."¹⁰⁵

But Jayaprakash continued to be in rapport with Nehru, the changed circumstances notwithstanding. That generated much bitterness and not a little suspicion in the Socialist Party. It was alleged that Jayaprakash operated on a wavelength which was similar to Nehru's, that he was incapable of doing the correct thing where Nehru was concerned

In referring to Jayaprakash's involvement in the political moves which took place immediately after the assassination of Gandhi in an article written in September 1955, Lohia remarked: "Immediately upon Gandhiji's assassina-

¹⁰⁴Rammanohar Lohia, "Jawaharlal Must Answer," *Congress Socialist*, Vol 2, No 18, 30 April 1938, pp 315-16; 18.

¹⁰⁵Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, op cit, pp 13, 48-49.

tion, weighty socialist leaders had made a public announcement overnight to participate in the government and at the same time accusing Sardar Patel of criminal negligence and, later, of retracting the accusations against the Home Minister [Patel], all inside of a week. The Prime Minister had also a large number of whispering campaigns ... that a rightist and reactionary conspiracy, whose position kept on changing, was afoot against the progressive Prime Minister and that a wonderful opportunity existed to save the Prime Minister and to stay with him in the government. Some such whispers must have done their work when socialist leaders made their accusations on Sardar Patel and also their offers to participate in the government." ¹⁰⁶

Lohia returned to the theme in another context. While discoursing on forces and factors he considered responsible for the division of the country, Lohia observed: "The superb craft that Mr Nehru possesses expressed itself in the controversy around the ultimate responsibility for Gandhiji's murder. A few days after the murder, Kamaladevi¹⁰⁷ and Mr Jayaprakash Narayan came to me and wanted me to put my signature on a joint statement which, among other suggestions, accused Sardar Patel of neglect of the Home Minister's duty, also because he had taken over too many portfolios.

"I objected to this part of the statement and wanted to have it generalised into an accusation against all such ministers, including the Prime Minister, who had taken over more than one portfolio. We argued a little, with some heat, but the two of them had to go away without my signature. They returned the next day with the change that I had desired...

"At the Press conference, where the joint statement was released, the generalised accusation against ministers holding more than one portfolio was pinpointed by Mr Narayan to refer to the Home Minister... The publicity

¹⁰⁶Rammanohar Lohia, "Planned Will to Power," *Will to Power and other Writings*, Navahind Prakashan, Hyderabad, 1956, pp 198-99.

¹⁰⁷Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, a prominent socialist leader;

that attended our suggestions, including the accusation, was enormous. It was of very great help to Mr Nehru for, in tarring Sardar Patel with an almost irremovable blot, it helped the former to go up in the people's estimation.

"I cannot say whether there was any bargain or, if there was one, where the thing went wrong. In any event, Mr Nehru came to Mr Narayan's rescue when the latter fell into such deep waters as were beyond his skill or strength as a result of the howl the Patel forces put up. Mr Nehru shielded his protege, and in this case a very able agent, with an exceedingly generous and very public tribute."¹⁰⁸

Lohia was not the only person to notice this. Abul Kalam Azad, Union Minister of Education, also testified to this: "There was naturally a wave of anger once the tragedy had taken place. Some people openly accused Sardar Patel of inefficiency. Jayaprakash Narayan showed considerable courage in raising this issue. In the meeting which was held in Delhi to express our sense of horror and sorrow at Gandhiji's death, he said clearly that the Home Minister [Patel] of the Government of India could not escape the responsibility for this assassination."¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, it would not do to deny that Union Home Minister Patel did not as vigorously keep vigil over Gandhi's security as he was expected to. Men who knew what they were talking about could be heard to say that Gandhi's murder was neither the act of a witless assassin nor unrelated to the total political climate that obtained in the country. In the words of Payne, "by negligence, by indifference, by deliberate design on the part of many faceless people, the assassination had been accomplished."¹¹⁰ Indeed, it is nothing short of an indictment of the Indian Government's Police Minister Patel when it is emphasised that two decades after Gandhi's assassination "a court of inquiry" concluded "that a permissive assassination, tolerated by police and high government officials, had taken

¹⁰⁸Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, op cit, pp 79-80.

¹⁰⁹Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Indian Wins Freedom: An Autobiographical Narrative*; Orient Longmans; Calcutta, pp 223-24.

¹¹⁰Quoted in Allan and Wendy Scarfe op cit, p 205.

place."¹¹¹.

Jayaprakash and Patel heartily disliked each other, politically speaking.¹¹² So bad were their relations that after Patel's death his daughter Maniben Patel issued a statement identifying Jayaprakash as one of those who had indirectly hastened her father's death.

It is another matter that years later, to be more precise, 1974, Jayaprakash suddenly felt that he had not been fair to Patel in the past. It was therefore proper that he should take a fresh look at the man and his earlier assessment. Jayaprakash made his reassessment of Vallabhbhai in the course of his presidential speech on the occasion of the Sardar Patel Jayanti [birth centenary] celebrations in Delhi on 31 October 1971. What he said deserves to be reproduced at some length, for it gives an inkling of the great change that had in the years between occurred in his world of thought and ideas. If his earlier appraisal was largely subjective, the later one was wishful thinking.

This also came in handy to prop up his revaluation of Nehru. Jayaprakash said: "Rajaji [C Rajagopalchari] once unburdened his heart by publicly confessing to a wrong he had done to Sardar Patel. I find myself in a similar situation: the dominant feeling within me today is one of self-reproach, because during his lifetime I was not merely a critic but an opponent of the great Sardar. For his leadership in the struggle for independence I had great admiration and respect. And yet we Congress Socialists... considered the Sardar a reactionary who was and would remain a defender and supporter of capitalism... To some extent we enjoyed Jawaharlal Nehru's support. But Nehru never shared the Congress Socialist platform and never lent his support to any important resolutions or amendments that we moved in the Congress Working Committee or the All India Congress Committee.

"After independence, the adroitness with which the Sardar integrated the various princely states with India... was something unique. No leader but the Sardar could

¹¹¹*ibid.*, p 205

¹¹²See appendix G for photocopies of Jayaprakash—Patel correspondence.

have pulled off the feat. The intransigence of the rulers of Hyderabad and Junagadh did give the country some anxious moments. But acting on the principle that only the people of a state could decide whether the state was to accede to India or Pakistan or was to remain independent of both, Sardar Patel brought about their accession with the consent of the people concerned and in the teeth of opposition by the rulers.

"The Kashmir issue alone was somehow left to Pandit Nehru, which proved to be unfortunate for the nation. Because of Panditji's mishandling, the issue is no longer an internal affair, as it should be, but is smouldering as an international issue in the United Nations and its Security Council...Many a veteran leader in the country maintains that had the matter been handled by the Sardar (and it fell within his domain) he would have found a satisfactory solution.^{/13}

"So long as the reins of the country were in the iron hands of the Sardar, the progressives—the Socialists and Communists as also the leftists in the Congress—all complained that Sardar Patel made it impossible for Jawaharlal Nehru to change the economic and social structure of the country... But with the passing away of the Sardar, Nehru had 13 to 14 years to prove himself. But, apart from some verbal changes in the professed aims of the Congress, little progress was made towards socialism... The rich have become richer and the poor poorer and unemployment has mounted. Those who had volutarily suffered privation and spent their youth behind bars succumbed to the lure of power and a life of ease and comfort. Nehru himself chose to shift from 17 York Road (which was by no means a small place) to the palatial house of the erstwhile Commander-in-Chief. Nehru maintained that he did so to maintain the 'dignity of state'...

^{/13}Jayaprakash's categories of values and judgment seemed to have got badly mixed up. In order to breathe Nehru because of the then prevailing exigencies of politics, he bent over backwards to discover virtues where none existed. Jayaprakash knew only too well that Patel was not the perfect man he would have others believe, nor Nehru a villain.

As compared with the Prime Minister's mansion, the Sardar's official residence was modest, though he was not a socialist." What should one say about Jayaprakash when this is contrasted with the allegation he had made a couple of years earlier, in an article in *States*, that "Sardar lived in a huge house." The Sardar's daughter took exception to this and in a letter to Jayaprakash, on 4 November 1972, she strongly refuted the charge.¹¹⁴

The mellifluous tribute Jayaprakash, the tallest among the builders of the Indian socialist movement, paid to Patel did not go unnoticed. Even some of his friends, not to speak of his detractors, found it hard to swallow the lavish praise he heaped on Patel. Those who were charitably disposed towards Jayaprakash felt that he was carried away by emotions while crediting Patel with qualities that the latter himself perhaps would not have put in a claim for. Others thought that the whole thing was of a piece with Jayaprakash's stance on politics at that time.

Jayaprakash's reappraisal of Patel was followed some four years later, 1978, to be more exact, by his revaluation of Nehru. The political climate after the defeat of Congress in the sixth parliamentary election in 1977 was surcharged with the feeling that Nehru was responsible for every misfortune the country had to suffer. Non-Congress politicians of every hue and shade, a few excepted, seemed to be in a hurry to condemn Nehru for both what he did and what he failed to do. It was in a way a case of visiting the daughter's sins upon the father. Nehru had suddenly become everybody's *bete noire*.

Explaining why he parted company with Nehru, Jayaprakash said, in the course of his foreword to a book published in 1978, that "the mixed liberal and Marxian model that Pandit Nehru put forward before the country seemed to hold great promise, and for a while it appeared that

¹¹⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, "Sardar. A Reappraisal, *This was Sardar—The Commemorative Volume*, (Birth Centenary Vol 1-7 Coordinating Editor : Manibehn V Patel, edited by G.M. Nandurkar; Vallabhbhai Patel Smarak Bhavan, Ahmedabad, 1974, pp 314, 316-17. Also see appendix E for photocopy of Manibehn Patel's letter to Jayaprakash.

the model was succeeding. But precisely at the time when it seemed to succeed I could see the germs of its destruction and that is why I parted company with him...the model itself was largely un-Indian and elitist and thus ultimately was bound to fail. It is no coincidence that the Nehruvian model produced the greatest disparities of income and wealth. It pushed more people below the poverty line than ever before. It created the most cynical elite class. And above all it caused the deepest permeation of corruption and immorality in our public life.

"What Mrs Indira Gandhi did during the eleven years of her rule was in many ways the accelerated projection of the Nehru model, except that Nehru worked through a democratic system. The irony of it all was that everything was done in the name of socialism, and the tragedy of it was that the model ultimately degenerated into authoritarianism at the hands of Congress leaders. That is why India had to go through a second democratic revolution in 1977."¹⁵

Whether or not Jayaprakash was right in his assessment of Nehru's socioeconomic philosophy is not proposed to be debated here. The point is that the statement contains, other things apart, certain obvious inaccuracies. The Socialist Party, of which Jayaprakash was general secretary, severed its connexion with Congress, of which Nehru was leader, in 1948, much before the latter's "economic model" got off the drawing board. But this did not see the last of the very cordial relations that Jayaprakash maintained with Nehru almost till the latter's death. In fact, Lohia and others of his way of thinking had all along repeated the accusation that Jayaprakash was too close to Nehru to be of any good for the socialist movement or, for that matter, active opposition politics.

This is not to deny that Jayaprakash criticised Nehru off and on, his internal and external policies and all that went with them. But Jayaprakash, unlike the most controversial and acerbic socialist leader, Lohia, never did

¹⁵Quoted in J.D. Sethi, *Gandhi Today*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, pp VII-VIII.

carry his criticism of Nehru to the extent of snapping every channel of communication with him. While Lohia was imprisoned fourteen times under Nehru's rule for leading protest movements, Jayaprakash saw the inside of a prison in post-independence India only once. But that is a story we shall discuss later.

The fact is that Jayaprakash-Nehru relations, which were never really ruptured, cannot be described in terms of easy equations as most people would desire. At different times in his long and chequered political career, Jayaprakash indeed appeared in the role of a critic of Nehru, occasionally quite unsparing too, but that did not impair their relations, personal or otherwise. A few instances out of many may be cited. In 1953, when Nehru's "economic model" was in operation, a serious dialogue between Jayaprakash and Nehru began with a view to bringing about Socialist Party-Congress cooperation at both official and non-official levels, much to the chagrin of many of his party colleagues, the most notable being Lohia. That this was one of the prime causes which split the Socialist Party vertically will later be discussed in detail.

Let us glance at some of Jayaprakash's letters to Nehru as well as his public statements which have a bearing on the topic. In a letter dated 30 September 1959—Jayaprakash had by then withdrawn from active politics—he requested Nehru to give serious thought to his proposal for "reconstruction of Indian polity." Endearingly addressing Nehru as "Dear Bhai" (brother) Jayaprakash said: "I am inflicting on you a rather long paper...with a good deal of thought and I beseech you most earnestly to be good enough to read it and give it your serious consideration. When you have read it and have also some time, I would like to come up and meet you to discuss this matter." He also mentioned that the paper had been sent to a few others including Indu—that was how he addressed Indira Gandhi.

Concluding the letter, Jayaprakash emphasised: "Once again I beg you to give your sympathetic consideration to the plea I have made in my paper. Without your support it would be impossible to move a single step forward

in that direction." Interestingly, Jayaprakash did not at that time think Nehru was a spent force, not at least if he had not just absentmindedly scribbled the following lines (subsequently struck out, though) in the draft letter: "It is no exggeration to say that the future of the country depends almost wholly on you [Nehru]." ¹¹⁶

The personal relations between the two men were so enduring that their political differences notwithstanding, Jayaprakash did not feel inhibited when it came to asking a favour of Nehru. This would be clearly borne out by Nehru's reply, dated 30 January 1960, to Jayaprakash's letter of the preceding 23 January. ¹¹⁷ Take another instance. A few weeks after Nehru's death, Jayaprakash went on record with the statement that "one of the great achievements of Pandit Nehru was his success in persuading the Congress Party and Parliament clearly define democratic socialism as the goal of the country....

"Had it not been for Panditji, I have no doubt that the Congress would have remained and continued to function more or less as a liberal party, maybe with some concern for social justice. Now that his inspiring leadership is no movement to examine to what extent we could help to push the country towards that goal." Having considered the issue carefully he prescribed that "the movements of Sarvodaya and democratic socialism have to work hand in hand, if the legacy of the great Pandit Nehru is not only to be preserved but also to be realised in actual life." ¹¹⁸ longer available, it is necessary for us in the Sarvodaya

Reference might also be made to the foreword Jayaprakash wrote to a book on Nehru published in December 1973. As Jayaprakash put it (the foreword was reproduced in the 13 October 1973, issue of *Everyman's* of which Jayaprakash was chairman of the editorial board), "Jawaharlal

¹¹⁶See appendix F for photocopy of the letter, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.

¹¹⁷See appendix G for photocopy of Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to Jayaprakash Narayan, the original of which is with Nehru-Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi.

¹¹⁸Jayaprakash Narayan, "Social Ownership and Statism," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, op cit, pp 193, 197.

had the soul of a poet, a most kindly heart and sensitive mind that reacted instantly to poverty and human misery, to vulgarity and ugliness... Jawaharlal, though weighed down by his great responsibility, never wavered in the socialist faith and tried till the end to give practical form to his noble dreams. Nevertheless, he was saddened by the disappointing results of his socialist policies, or of such of them as he tried to have implemented." Again, while addressing a two day seminar on Strategies for Rural Development in New Delhi on 9-10 February 1974, Jayaprakash called Nehru "the great Prime Minister Nehru, a man of vast vision...one of the greatest men of modern history."¹¹⁹

In reviewing in a taped interview, in April 1978, his relations with Nehru immediately before and after independence, Jayaprakash said: "I think what he [Nehru] wanted me to do was to take hold of the Congress and become the Congress president. He nearly succeeded but for Vallabhbhai, Dr Rajendra Prasad and a few others who thought that would be a calamity. He wanted me more for the organisational wing of the nationalist movement rather than the official wing, the government.... Once, in a reminiscent mood, he told me: 'Jayaprakash, do you know that you share all my faults and all my virtues?'" Continuing in the same vein, Jayaprakash observed: "Probably the situation would have been different then if we had pulled together, done something and not merely reinforced our respective strengths and weaknesses."¹²⁰

A point of clarification. Jayaprakash's reassessment of Patel and Nehru was done in a vastly different context. After the sixth general election in 1977, which put Congress to rout, the country's political scenario seemed to have witnessed a change. Men who were said to have inspired and guided the nation earlier were suddenly discovered to be false prophets, and similar ideas were found to be misconceived notions. Nehru had become a bad name, a colossus with clay feet who must be cut down to size,

¹¹⁹*Everyman's*, Vol 1, No 33, 16 February 1974, p 9.

¹²⁰Author-Jayaprakash taped interview on 22 April 1978. Also see *Sunday*, Volume 6, Issue 15, 25 June 1978, p. 24.

so ran the argument. It seemed the Janata Party's victory at the polls had been achieved against Nehru.

Other things apart, there is an element of anachronism in Jayaprakash's statement that he parted company with Nehru because of the latter's "economic model" and all that went with it. Now, if Jayaprakash had in mind the Congress Socialist Party's break with Congress when he said he had ended his relations with Nehru because of his approach to the problems of the Indian economy, this would not tally with facts. For the socialists quit Congress much before Nehru's economic philosophy got a chance to give direction to the country's development plans.

It is matter of record that even after the development plans went into operation Jayaprakash maintained a continual dialogue with Nehru at both public and private levels. Neither his withdrawal from the socialist movement in the mid-1950s nor his subsequent immersion in bhoodan-sarvodaya movement eclipsed the very warm and affectionate relations he had with Nehru, their occasional, at times stinging, mutual criticism notwithstanding.

What merits notice is that the relations between the two men did not admit of being defined in terms which may be relevant in similar cases. There was something rather unusual about it. So much so that a perusal of their mutual correspondence—one does not have to read between the lines—would suggest an element of ambivalence in their relations. For instance, Nehru's letter, dated 25 January 1963, to Jayaprakash. Replying to Jayaprakash's two letters of the same date, Nehru said: "It is true that many things that you have said have pained me greatly, and it has seemed to me that there is a very considerable difference between your views on some matters and mine. But it is not the views that count so much, for these may differ, but the impression that I got that you dislike me. I am sorry that you have got the impression that I have no affection or respect for you. All I can say is that that is a wrong impression.

"You have said that I should have met you to discuss these matters. I have, in fact, met you from time to time.

I did not always know when you were here. Apart from that, I confess that I hesitated to send for you because I felt that might embarrass you and possibly me too."²¹ Could it be reduced from this letter, written about a year and a half before Nehru's death, that Nehru and Jayaprakash lived in mutually exclusive worlds of thoughts, ideas and values?

Details of the disastrous events which ruffled the world before the outbreak of the Second World War need not detain us. Nor is it useful for our purpose to have a blow by blow account of the drift of international affairs, which unmistakably was towards war. Indeed, perceptive people everywhere felt that the world was being inexorably driven to an unprecedented catastrophe. The die had been cast by the time Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Britain had made his pilgrimage to Adolf Hitler at Berchtesgarden only to sign the infamous Munich Pact a little later, fondly believing that this would secure international peace. No sensible man, white, brown or black, had any illusion about the shape of things to come. Mankind was in a dilemma, and it did not have to strain its ears to hear the footfalls of death and destruction.

The political horizon was covered with clouds which, after the outbreak of war, announced the coming of storms. The socialists insisted on launching a mass struggle. Jayaprakash was of the opinion that the Congress right-wing was in no mood for a struggle and the socialists should therefore create "such conditions in the country as would take us nearer to struggle." Of course, he said, "the attitude of the rightwing leaders, particularly of Gandhiji and his lieutenants, should also be understood by us." And he emphasised it would be "wrong" on the part of the socialists to "think that Gandhiji has made truce with imperialism and has given up direct action and become a Constitutionalist." Also he sought to remind those who cared to listen to him that "Gandhiji wants that we

²¹ See appendix H for photocopies of this and some other letters Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Jayaprakash Narayan, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

should leave everything to him on trust... We are prepared to give him our loyalty, but only in struggle."¹²²

On 27 March 1940 Jayaprakash was sentenced to prison for nine months. He was released in December 1940 only to be rearrested on 1 January 1941. Under detention at Deoli, he denounced the "individual satyagraha" Gandhi had earlier launched "as a fraud and called upon socialists to use violence to overthrow the British."¹²³

While in Deoli detention camp he undertook a 31-day fast, demanding civilised treatment for the detainees and repatriation to their respective home states. However, he gave up the fast at Gandhi's instance. The detainees were subsequently repatriated and Jayaprakash was transferred to Hazaribagh jail in early 1942. Along with some colleagues, notably Suraj Narain Singh, he escaped from prison soon after Gandhi called for a do-or-die struggle in August 1942.

The 1942 Quit India movement found Jayaprakash in the very eye of the storm. Not unlike countless other Indians, he took it as a now-or-never chance to wrest freedom from unwilling hands. He also made it clear by his words and actions that the issues of ends and means and of principles and political ethics were to be kept in the deep freeze for the time being. Nevertheless, he defended his action in the name of Congress, Gandhi and what have you. In his second letter, "To All fighters for Freedom", dated 1 September 1943, Jayaprakash said: "A controversy has sprung up...on the question of violence and nonviolence...to me a controversy on this issue at this stage seems meaningless." Emphasising that every freedom fighter was "free to choose his own method", he observed that "those who believe in nonviolence may harbour the fear that those who practise violence might compromise the position of Gandhiji. That fear is unfounded. Gandhiji's adherence to nonviolence is so complete...that not a hundred thousand Churchills and Amerys will be able to compromise him."

Even as Jayaprakash advocated a no-holds-barred fight

¹²²Jayaprakash Narayan, "Need for a Struggle" (unpublished, 1940), *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, pp 45-46.

¹²³Wendy and Scarfe, *op cit*, p 128.

against the British, he did not lose his sense of perspective. He was quite clear about the issues involved in the war. What he said about Subhas Bose illustrates the point. In his own words, "it is easy to denounce Subhas as a Quisling. Those who are themselves Quislings of Britain find it easiest to denounce him. But nationalist India knows him as a fervent patriot and as one who has always been in the forefront of his country's fight for freedom. It is inconceivable that he should ever be ready to sell his country...he has permitted himself to accept aid from the enemies of his country's enemies.... In thus accepting help from a third party he may be deceived in the end, but there can be no question as to the honesty of his purpose..." Having said this, he hastened to reiterate the basic principles that should determine the freedom fighter's approach to the whole thing.

Admitting the "importance of the Shonan Indian government and the National Army" [established and raised by Subhas], Jayaprakash said: "I must emphasise that our freedom largely depends upon our own strength and resources..... No outside help by itself can free us. It is fantastic to believe that Subhas' army, no matter how large, can defeat the Allied armies in India. If any army can defeat them, it may possibly be the Japanese. But, if the Japanese defeat the British in India, they would not quietly hand over India to us...whatever the understanding between Tojo and Subhas. We must be ready in the event of an Axis-Allied clash in India to seize power ourselves. Only if we are ready to make this attempt can outside help, such as Subhas' National Army, be of value to us and Tojo be prevented from annexing India. It is difficult to say how far Subhas himself is conscious of this aspect of India's national strategy. This brings me to the question, what should we do when the war enters our door. British policy has made the average Indian so anti-British that he is prepared if not to welcome the Japanese, at least to remain indifferent to the Anglo-Japanese conflict. This indifference will be our death... In the areas where war is waged or which the Japanese occupy... We must establish a Swaraj government... we must appeal to re-

treating units of the India Army to stay behind and become the people's army."

Lest there should be any misunderstanding, Jayaprakash firmly stated that "India's fight for freedom is at once anti-imperialist (and therefore also anti-fascist, for imperialism is the parent of fascism) and a drive to end the war through the intervention of the common man. Neither Allied nor Axis victory is our aim... We work for the defeat both of imperialism and fascism."

For a number of reasons the second letter to freedom fighters makes interesting reading. Apart from other things, it gives an idea of Jayaprakash's assessment of some of the Indians who later came to be acknowledged as builders of independent India. According to Jayaprakash, "since the beginning of the struggle [1942] there has been a group of Indians who have deplored the step taken at Bombay [Congress Working Committee's adoption of Quit India resolution] and attempted in their wonted manner to 'resolve the deadlock'... Every time India launches a fight for freedom this group sets out to 'resolve the deadlock.' The fact that men like Shri Rajagopalachari, Bhulabhai Desai, K. M. Munshi, whose rightful place was in the midst of fighters, have joined the association of *saboteurs* of [the] *freedom movement*,¹²⁴ should make no difference."¹²⁵

Up to this point it is not difficult to keep track of Jayaprakash's argument, whether one agrees with him or not. What however creates confusion are the diametrically opposed views that he came to hold years later. To get the point one has only to glance through his encomiastic references to Rajagopalachari some three decades later.

In the late 1970s Jayaprakash changed his opinion about Rajagopalachari, the onetime "saboteur of the freedom movement," and closely associated himself with his centenary celebrations. The praise he lavished on Rajagopalachari would perhaps have embarrassed CR if he had been alive. Could it be that exigencies of politics in the 1970s, when Jayaprakash re-entered the political arena after his

¹²⁴Emphasis added

¹²⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, *To All Fighters for Freedom*, (1 September 1943), *Azad Hind Kitab*, 1946, pp 3, 5; 10-12.

withdrawal from active politics in the 1950s, determined his approach? We shall come to that later. The British government's assessment of the 1942 movement and the role of the socialists, particularly Jayaprakash, in it have already been discussed.

The Second World War was over after the USA decided that Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be the first human habitations to receive the baptism of a nuclear holocaust. And Britain, though otherwise grateful to its wartime saviour, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, asked him to relinquish office. In the 1945 general election, the Labour Party replaced the ruling Conservative Party and Clement Attlee became the tenant of 10 Downing Street. The world had changed and was never to be the same again. The Briton knew he would have to quit the Indian subcontinent, the internal and international relations of forces being what they were. The Indian also was aware that he would be free, despite himself.

No matter how one looks at it, 1946 was cataclysmic. The entire subcontinent was in turmoil, counting the minutes before another day would dawn. The open rebellion of a section of the Royal Indian Navy, based in Bombay, and widespread disturbances throughout the country prompted the Labour government to send a three-man Cabinet Mission comprising Stafford Cripps, who had in March 1942 led an unsuccessful delegation to mend fences with Congress, Pethick-Lawrence and A V Alexander, members of the British Cabinet, to India in March 1946 to engineer a negotiated settlement of the political question. And Jayaprakash and Lohia were released from prison, at Gandhi's insistence, on 12 April 1946.

As was to be expected, the naval mutiny enjoyed support of the Congress Socialist Party to the hilt. Gandhi however thought otherwise and bluntly condemned it. Referring to the mutiny at his evening prayer on 13 March 1946, he said in Bombay: "The news of recent happenings in Bombay has filled me with shame and humiliation."¹²⁶

¹²⁶Quoted in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma. Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol 7, Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, Bombay 1953, p 86.

Jayaprakash was highly critical of the Congress stance on the Cabinet Mission. He was sceptical about the outcome of its dialogue with the Congress leaders. He emphasised repeatedly that "through negotiations we cannot get full freedom, because our strength is divided."

He feared that "in case we get only partial freedom, we may have to fight to gain full independence if the British refuse to allow us to proceed constitutionally to achieve that end." He charged the Congress leaders with neglecting their primary duty: "From the time Congress was declared a legal body it has been busy with elections only." If that was bad, Jayaprakash argued, worse still was the Congress posture after the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in India. Because of this, he felt constrained to point out, "the attention of the people is directed towards Delhi looking forward to a peaceful transfer of power to the Indian." And nothing could persuade Jayaprakash to believe that this would not have an adverse effect on the people's morale. While this lulled the nation, the British were "getting ready to nip in the bud any attempt on our part to rise in revolt"¹²⁷ if a negotiated solution to the problem of independence could not be arrived at, he concluded.

Events gained momentum. The Cabinet Mission mooted the idea of a constituent assembly to decide the question of constitution-making. The Congress Working Committee resolved that Congress should participate in the proposed constituent assembly, but the socialists strongly opposed it. At the AICC meeting on 6 July 1946, which approved the Working Committee's 26 June resolution in favour of Congress participation in the proposed constitution-making body, socialists put up a stout resistance. Others besides, Jayaprakash warned against acceptance of the proposal and insisted that Congress should stand firm until freedom was achieved.

Gandhi however would have none of Jayaprakash's arguments. Supporting the AICC resolution, he observed: "I am willing to admit that the proposed constituent

¹²⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Revolution of 1942" *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, op cit, pp 50-52.

assembly is not the parliament of the people. It has many defects. But you are all seasoned and veteran fighters. A soldier is never afraid of danger." After these general remarks Gandhi directed the thrust of his attack against Jayaprakash: "I am surprised that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan said yesterday that it would be dangerous to participate in the proposed constituent assembly and, therefore, they should reject the Working Committee's resolution. I was not prepared to hear such defeatist language from the lips of a tried fighter like Jayaprakash."¹²⁸

It was a foregone conclusion that Gandhi would carry the day. So he did. By 204 votes to 51 AICC demolished the socialist case for turning down the Cabinet Mission's proposal. The voting spoke volumes for the fact that by and large Congressmen were reconciled to a compromise on the basic political problem. But Jayaprakash apparently held entirely different views. He did "not think" that this vote represents truly the opinion in the country, particularly in Congress." He further observed that "the AICC debate depressed me, particularly Moulana Azad's reply to the debate. So did Gandi's speech." Not only that, he accused the Congress leaders of flippancy, of not having, "made any serious attempt to reply to the points raised by us." And the most important point was, as Jayaprakash saw it, that "India today is in a far stronger position than ever before... The British are fully aware of this, whereas our leadership does not seem to appreciate the possibilities of the present situation."

Jayaprakash held that the Congress leadership, incapable of correctly appraising "our strength," failed to grasp the nettle. Congress ought to have "insisted on the British quitting India, on their transferring all power to the people before taking up the country's constitutional problems ... The path of Congress was clear—to reject the British plan and go to the people ... and organise them for the final struggle for freedom." Also, he thought, Gandhi had not been quite objective in referring to his criticism of the Cabinet Mission's scheme of things. As

¹²⁸Quoted in Tendulkar, Vol 7, *op cit*, p 175.

he put it, "Mahatma Gandhi, who had not heard us speak but who had apparently heard reports of our speeches, made great use of the argument that it is not in the nature of courageous people or of *satyagrahis* to be afraid of danger ... I wonder if he believes that *satyagrahis* are seeking election to the constituent assembly ... I find it difficult to understand why Gandhiji should place himself so far beyond realities as to talks of a constituent assembly of *satyagrahis*, when probably extremely few, if any, *satyagrahis* are likely to be present there." That apart, the Congress approach to the issue negated "a declared Congress policy, that no settlement would be acceptable to us except on the basis of India's independence and unity. There's no guarantee of declaration of independence yet and national unity is in grave jeopardy. Yet a settlement has been made."¹²⁹

The argument looked fine on paper. But when it came to suiting action to the word Jayaprakash did not stand firm although Congress policy was apparently determined by expediency. His argument also implied that Gandhi had in a way compromised himself by agreeing to the British proposal of a constituent assembly without a guarantee of the country's integrity. Still, Jayaprakash did not find this to contradict his defence of CSP's policy of "neutrality" to the Congress decision to participate, pursuant to the Cabinet Mission's proposal, in the formation of an interim government at the centre.

In an article published in *Janata* (CSP's mouthpiece) on 6 October 1946, subsequently included in *Towards Total Revolution*, Jayaprakash said that "neutrality" need not necessarily "signify lack of decision or policy ... Neutrality in certain circumstances may be, and is, a positive policy." Referring to Moulana Azad's resolution at the AICC meeting recommending ratification of formation of an interim government with Nehru as prime minister, he said that CSP deliberately did not support it "because from the beginning we were opposed to any settlement with Britain at this stage we could not appose the re-

¹²⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "The AICC session where leadership failed," *Towards Total Revolution*; Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 58-62.

solution. Opposition meant that we wanted the interim government to resign. Had the government not come into being it was open to us to oppose its formation. But having once being formed it would have been the height of irresponsibility to ask it to resign immediately. That would only lower the prestige of Congress and make it a laughing stock of the world. Also, when the formation of the provisional government in circumstances that have put Congress in a stronger position vis-a-vis the foreign power, and its agent, communalism, has brought the forces of reaction in open opposition to it, creating an unprecedented internal crisis, it would be cowardly and a signal disservice to the nation to demand resignation of the provisional government."

In the given context, he said, the government could be asked to resign only if it "proves incompetent or is found to have deviated from the path of freedom and of Congress principles and objectives. Clearly, such a situation has not arisen yet." The government of course could also be asked to resign, he conceded, "when a conflict arises between the provisional government and the British government that can only be resolved by an appeal to open direct mass action In this manner we see that the issues were simple ... We could neither support nor oppose the Azad resolution, the only course open to us was that of neutrality." Having stated his case regarding the party's stand on the issue, Jayaprakash advised his colleagues not to bother about how others might react. "Leftwing infantilism is as harmful as rightwing reaction. Scientific revolutionaries who understand dialectics when applied to day-to-day problems must know that the path of revolution is never a straight road, but with ups and down, of twists and turn and detours."¹³⁰

That was how Jayaprakash sought to defend what evidently was indefensible logically and in terms of CSP's declared principles and policy. It was conveniently forgotten that formation of the interim government violated the basic principles and aims of Congress. Instead

¹³⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "Neutrality," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *ibid*, pp 63-65.

of demanding that Congress come out of the interim government and take what action might ensure the unity and integrity of the country, Jayaprakash resorted to sophism to cover up CSP's failure to act up to its principles. It was clearly a verbal exercise to justify CSP's failure to strike out an independent line for itself. It did not occur to Jayaprakash that two wrongs do not make a right and that his party had committed the same wrongs for which he had upbraided the Congress leaders. The most significant aspect of this was however that CSP, of which Jayaprakash was general secretary, could not think of making a stand for or against anything that did not enjoy Gandhiji's blessings. And Gandhi still stood by the Congress leaders.

For proof, if that is at all necessary, we might refer to another incident that took place about this time. Jayaprakash had called for a *hartal* [stoppage of work] on 9 August 1946, apparently in remembrance of the day the Quit India movement was launched. The Congress leaders had no reasons to appreciate his move, particularly in view of the critical stage its parleys with the Cabinet Mission had reached. It was left to Gandhi to give him a good dressing down. Gandhi observed: "The 9th August, like 6th April, 13th April, and 26th January, is a red-letter day in the battle of India's freedom. These are days for universal *hartal* in terms of *satyagraha*, that is, truth and non-violence. But today, considered in terms of *satyagraha*, *hartals* are taboo, and more specially so, on the the coming 9th of August. They would be fitting if *hartals* are desired to signalise violence."

Then Gandhi came to the point: "Two powerful voices have spoken: one of the president of the Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and the other of the president of the socialist group, Jayaprakash Narayan. It is delicate for me to give my opinion when these two ardent lovers of their country speak in opposition. But as a *satyagrahi*, I must overcome the delicacy."

And so he did only to remind Jayaprakash that he had no fault to find with Nehru's stance. In uniquely sophist language Gandhi remarked that "Jayaprakahh Narayan

language Gandhi remarked that "Jayaprakash Narayan is a Congressman. It is an open secret that he was offered a seat on the working committee by Panditji, naturally, under the belief he disloyal to the Congress in action. If now, in spite of knowing the Congress president's views to the contrary, he adheres to his opinion given to the contrary, it would appear to be an act of disloyalty to the Congress. If, therefore, he has not withdrawn from the false position, I hope, recognising the aptness of my remarks, he will see the wisdom of retracing his steps." ¹³¹ Gandhi made it perfectly clear, lest there should be any misconception, that Nehru was the heir apparent and, therefore, his must be the last word on the subject.

Obligingly, Jayaprakash beat a hasty retreat. Having compromised his position all along, he could not choose but obey. Even if the justness of his cause was past all doubt he could not have in the given context dared challenge Gandhi's fiat—and that was the most disastrous flaw in the pre-independence CSP's character. Jayaprakash was well aware of what befell those, for instance Subhas, who threw down the gauntlet to Gandhi. The shadow of the recent past seemed to haunt him, and he could not muster enough courage to defy Gandhi. He must have sometimes wondered how Nehru and Patel, Gandhi's supposedly chosen disciples, could ignore Gandhi with impunity when it served their purpose. The fact that, in September 1946, Jayaprakash rejoined, albeit at the request of Gandhi and Nehru, the Congress Working Committee, when the interim government had been brought to the verge of dissolution, was in tune with his line of least resistance where Gandhi was concerned.

Well before the people came to know about it, the decks had been cleared for the dismemberment of this ancient land. Gutless old nationalists, communal black-mailers and crafty white men who had lost all sense of history and who agreed to an exodus from India that was as ignoble as had been their arrival here—they were all

¹³¹ Tendulkar, *op cit*, p 204.

in league to divide the subcontinent. Each of the three parties to this odious business had its own set of reasons not to act otherwise. The aging Congress leaders were frightened that their refusal to endorse partition would only prolong Hindu-Muslim conflict and thereby indefinitely stall their prospect of attaining power. They sought safety in flight.

The Pakistan zealots, though never quite sure of the logic of their demand for a separate state or of the possibility that the Congress leaders, particularly Gandhi, would agree to fulfil their pipedream, pressed it, hoping to exact the largest possible concession. As for the British, they initially wavered between two opinions. But a combination of factors—the irresoluteness of the Congress leaders, concern for their own interests and the hope that they could get the maximum mileage possible out of a partitioned and, therefore, weak subcontinent—eventually prevailed upon the British to ensure that each obtained his deserts. Their widely divergent interests notwithstanding, the disparate groups of men agreed to redraw the map of India as cavalierly as others had done to parcel out Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

The Socialists had all along stubbornly refused to entertain any idea of bisecting India. But they backtracked when Congress wriggled out of its solemn pledge to resist any attempt to do so. Meeting in Delhi on 10 June 1947, the National Executive of the Socialist Party reiterated that it totally opposed the Mountbatten plan for partition. In the same breath the Committee admitted that the radical forces including socialists had failed to make the most of the post-war situation and nurse a revolutionary movement which alone could frustrate the partition scheme. The resolution, which the National Executive of the Socialist Party adopted, expressed "disapproval and grief at the proposed division of the country. At the same time, the executive cannot fail to notice that this decision of such tremendous import has not surprised or shocked the people as much as it has led them into a mood of reluctant acceptance. Through a series

of successive acts, the people have slipped into accepting the decision to divide as inevitable and the only way out. Each act of surrender, perhaps not of much import by itself but of great effect as a link in the chain and the refusal of Congress leadership to prepare a position and hold on to it [has] brought us to this fateful situation. The Socialist Party must also record its own failure and that of the wider revolutionary movement in working out an alternate and positive policy."

As if to keep the record straight, the National Executive also underlined that "the division of the country can at no stage be and must never be accepted as much."¹³²

It may in passing be noted that the approach to the question was roughly similar to Jayaprakash's attitude to the 1935 Act, Congress acceptance of it and the subsequent formation of Congress ministries in seven British Indian provinces in 1937. On each issue the initial stand as a matter of principle was unqualified opposition only to be followed by submission as soon as Gandhi nodded his approval of the official line.

It is beyond the scope of this study to go into the details of the ignominy of partition. Certain broad facts may be glanced at to get a perspective of the nation's contemporary history, an idea of the follies, foibles and pusillanimity of men who were supposed to direct the course of India's journey of freedom. The role that Nehru and Patel played at the most critical moment, when the country's fate was being decided, was anything but what posterity might proudly look upon. They played safe, substituting expediency for principles. Even Gandhi's stand on the issue was not perhaps apparently intelligible to the people.

A scrutiny of recorded facts would indicate that pragmatism and rationalisation determined Gandhi's ultimate decision to support partition. He was fully aware that his most trusted lieutenants, Nehru and Patel, had without his prior knowledge agreed to the country's dismemberment. Others apart, Lohia would

¹³²*Resolutions, Socialist Party, Bombay, 1947, p 16.*

readily bear this out. He knows what he is talking about, for he along with Jayaprakash attended on invitation the Working Committee meeting which consented to partition.

At this meeting, as Lohia puts it, Gandhi "wanted the Congress Party to honour the commitments made by its leaders. He would therefore ask Congress to accept the principle of partition. After accepting the principle, Congress should make a declaration concerning its execution. It should ask the British government and the Viceroy to step aside, once Congress and the Muslim League had signified their acceptance of partition. The partitioning of the country should be carried out jointly by the Congress Party and the Muslim League without the intervention of a third party. This was, I thought at that time and still do think, a grand tactical stroke. Much has been said about the saint having simultaneously been a tactician, but this fine and cunning proposal has, to my knowledge, not so far been put on record.

"Dr Khan Saheb, the elder brother of the Frontier Gandhi [Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan], was the first and the only one to shout the proposal down as utterly impracticable. There was no need for anyone else to oppose the proposal. It was not considered. I remonstrated with Dr Khan that the beauty of the proposal lay precisely in its impracticability and that India would not lose if Mr Jinnah and the Congress representatives failed to agree on how to partition the country without British assistance. Who listened to such remonstrances? The proposal was in itself cunning, but, in view of the determination of the Congress leadership to buy freedom at the price of unity. It made no practical meaning. It would have made meaning if Gandhiji had backed his proposal up with the prospect of action."¹³³ This of course Gandhi did not do.

The story does not end here. Later time, when he turned his thoughts to it, Lohia realised that the socialists, including himself, could not be absolved from failure to live up to their declared principles and ideological commitment. In

¹³³Lohia; *Guilty Men* etc, *op cit*, pp 11-12.

his words. "my own opposition to partition was persistent and vocal, but it could not have been serious enough and I now recollect some false notes. In any event, my opposition could not have moved mountains. It could only have been on record as the healthful opposition of a fighter for freedom without much influence. Nevertheless, the absence of serious opposition to partition even from a man like me, who had absolutely no selfish axe to grind, showed the depths of weakness and fear to which our people and I, as an ordinary one among them, had fallen."

Speaking in the same vein, he records: "I was a man of no consequence. So were millions of others like me. We could not have changed the course of history in an immediate sense, but we might have borne witness to our protest against it. It was a matter of great sorrow to me today that not one man died or sat in jail when this great land of ours was partitioned. I regret greatly that I did nothing to get into a jail at India's partition. The dread but false prospect of Hindu-Muslim rioting had so blinded me as to render me incapable of bearing witness to my faith at the most decisive moment of my life and the country's recent history. So were others blinded. But something worse happened to the leadership; it was tempted."¹³⁴

In all this Gandhi's role was perhaps the most pathetic. He was the nation's acknowledged pathfinder; he was also its conscience keeper. But when Indian history's worst tragedy so far was being enacted he temporised and caved in. Could it be denied that Gandhi vowed at a prayer meeting, even as late as 31 May 1947, that "even if the whole of India burns, we shall not concede Pakistan, even if the Muslims demanded it at the point of the sword."¹³⁵

Yet when the moment of crises was reached he lent himself to the partition scheme. Addressing AICC in June 1947, according to Tendulkar, "Gandhi commended the Working Committee resolution, accepting the June 3 plan [of partition of the country]. The AICC, he said, had absolute freedom to accept or to reject the resolution. The rejection or the

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p 10, 36.

¹³⁵Quoted in Brecher, *op cit*, p 347.

amendment of the resolution would mean lack of confidence in the president and Working Committee, and they must naturally resign. The Working Committee as their representative had accepted the plan and it was the duty of the AICC to stand by them." Gandhi cautioned the dissidents, socialists and all, saying that, in the words of Tendulkar, "those who talked in terms of an immediate revolution or of an upheaval in the country would achieve it by throwing [out] this resolution [accepting partition], but Gandhi asked if they had the strength to take over the reins of the Congress and the government. 'Well, I have no strength to do it?' he said."

Of a piece with this was his appeal to the people, a few weeks before partition, to repose their trust in Nehru. For, Gandhi emphasised, "Jawaharlal cannot be replaced today, whilst the charge is being taken from Englishmen. He, a Harrow boy, a Cambridge graduate and a barrister, is wanted to carry on the negotiation with Englishmen." This was not indeed the language of a revolutionary bent on rousing the people to make a last ditch stand in defence of unity and integrity of the country.

On 15 August 1947, the day a truncated India attained freedom, "there [were] festivities all over the land. But the man who, more than anyone else, had been responsible for freeing India ... did not participate in these rejoicings."¹³⁶ A sad Gandhi stayed in the riot-torn city of Calcutta and not Delhi, trying to repair the broken cords of fraternity between the Hindus and the Muslims. He did not lack a sense of history or, perhaps, of the tragic. He could well appreciate that partition had done the most grievous wrong to Indian history and civilisation.

Was Gandhi afraid of what might have followed if he had firmly opposed partition, knowing as he did that his men had deserted him and that Congress would not rally to his support. If not, what persuaded him to bear witness to partition? What happened to talk of *satyagraha*, of nonviolent resistance to wrong and all that? As for Jayaprakash and his colleagues, they were much too insignificant at that time

¹³⁶Tendulkar, Vol 8, *op cit*, p 19, 3, 95.

to reverse the process. But that is not important. The important point is that they did not have the courage of their convictions. They opposed partition and yet at the crucial moment surrendered to Gandhi. That of course does not apply to the Communists, who chose to support partition as a matter of policy.

History, it is true, cannot be read by "ifs" and "but." Still, if the socialists and the Communists had unitedly opposed partition, who knows but that the story of India's struggle for freedom might have been written differently? And Gandhi might have had the issue of partition decided not at New Delhi's viceregal palace but on the field of battle.

Perhaps Lohia had a point when he said that "India's politics have hitherto lacked in grit, the hard core of a man or a belief that is impossible to grind Gandhiji possessed it in great measure. He was unable to transmit it to his colleagues and followers. Whether he is to blame or the period in which he lived, or both, can be a subject for fruitful enquiry. I can only say that this lack of grit and hard core caused the partition of the country, as it is continuing to cause the rot in the socialist movement, two of the great disasters of our lives."¹³⁷

¹³⁷Lohia, *Guilty Men* etc, op cit, pp 24-25.

CHAPTER III

Socialism with an Indian Face

Between 1934, when it was formally organised, and 1947, when freedom was achieved, the social movement endeavoured by and large to get recognised at one and the same time as a Marxist alternative to the Communist Party and a radical mentor of Congress. If Jayaprakash is any guide, CSP "was formed in 1934 by Congress workers who had come to accept socialism and who felt the need of giving to the ideals and programme of Congress a socialist orientation."¹³⁸

But Narendra Deva had a clearer perception of the role CSP was intended to play. He would rather the party was "regarded as its [Congress] ginger group," as he observed in his presidential address to the party's conference in Patna in 1949, "whose chief function was to prevent Congress from deviating from the revolutionary path and degenerating into a purely parliamentary party."¹³⁹ However, after the country's attainment of freedom the party's efforts were directed towards projecting itself as the party of socialism with an Indian identity, albeit overlaid with Marxist trappings, which could provide a viable alternative to Congress.

The party's first postwar conference, and fifth since its inception, was held at Kanpur in late February 1947. The conference was chaired by Lohia, who had earlier been released from detention in Portuguese India for leading a liberation struggle there. The Kanpur session was important for a number of reasons. Apart from dropping the word 'Congress' from its name, the party decided to give itself a platform and programme that were supposed to help it

¹³⁸Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Party and the Congress", *Janata*, 30 March 1947, p 7.

¹³⁹Report of the Seventh Annual Conference of the Socialist Party, Patna, 1949, p 6.

steer clear of both Congress and the Communist Party. The policy statement adopted at the Kanpur conference (subsequently revised and adopted as "the final thesis" at the party's General Council meeting at Nagpur in August 1947), said that the party stood for "democratic socialism", as opposed to "totalitarian communism" because it alone promised "the fullest economic and political democracy." To underline the point, the policy statement noted that "it is an axiom of Marxism that there can be no socialism without democracy."

Another point it emphasised was that its concept of democratic socialism should not be confused with the European variety of "social democracy." As the policy statement put it, "while the experiences of the interwar years in Europe brought out the defects of totalitarian communism, they also demonstrated the weaknesses, particularly during the German revolution, of social democracy. ... When history demanded decision, revolutionary action, social democracy afraid of violence and disorder and inhibited by doctrinaire ideas, forswore its historical role and allowed capitalism to re-entrench itself. ... This weak-kneed policy and the disastrous mistakes and disruptive tactics of world communism ultimately made possible the enthronement of Nazism.

"The Socialist Party, therefore, while firmly believing in democratic socialism and fully aware of the dangers of totalitarian communism, adheres steadfast to the path of revolution. The party sees no conflict between democracy and revolution."

The policy statement also emphasised that "the struggle of classes" generated the forces which "drive society towards socialism." In fact, "class struggle is the motive force in the transition to socialism." The logic of this apparently prevailed upon it to go on record with the observation that, theoretically, "state power can be captured by either... insurrectionary...or democratic means." But it thought fit to enter a caveat: "Democratic means can be used for the capture of state power only where full political democracy is functioning and the working class, the peasantry and the lower-middle class have reached a

high level of maturity and have created a powerful political party. Where these conditions do not exist, democratic methods must be ineffective and inadequate and sometimes dangerous."

Which of these methods should be followed in India and Pakistan would depend on "the success or failure of the efforts now being made in the respective constituent assemblies to create a democratic state. Should this effort fail... the capture of state power by socialists could only be possible by insurrectionary means. In the alternative, it could be accomplished through normal process of democracy."

Dealing with the question of dictatorship of the proletariat, the policy statement made it clear that "a dictatorship of the proletariat would have to be established" if "the new state in the hands of socialists" is threatened by "the counter-revolutionary elements in society." Its understanding of a proletarian dictatorship was that this "shall not be the dictatorship of a single class, or worse, of a single party." Indeed, it would have room for "all the classes forming the proletariat...and all the parties of the proletariat except those that believe in totalitarianism."

As for the party's relations with the Communist Party, the policy statement recorded that it "believed in socialist unity... chiefly in terms of unity between itself and the Communist Party... till March 1940." But this policy had to be "changed" subsequently as it became evident that the communists were not interested in "unity". On the contrary, their primary objective was "the disruption and ultimate dissolution of the Socialist Party." There was something more to it than just that. In fact, "the war years...showed conclusively... that the communist parties all over the world are completely under the control of the Russian government...and, under the ideological cloak of communism, they function everywhere as its permanent and loyal fifth column."

Between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party there was another "basic difference" which influenced the socialists to put up the shutters on the question of unity.

The Socialist Party's main objective was "the establishment of democratic socialism, whereas the objective of the Communist Party is totalitarian communism." Thus, the Socialist Party could not possibly have anything to do with the "slogan of unity" the Communist Party had "again raised."

That of course did not mean that the Socialist Party was "anti-Russian" as the communists alleged. In reality, "the Socialist Party...is not only not hostile to the Soviet Union but even its friend." It is just that the socialists made it a condition that "this friendship must always be on the basis of complete equality and that free India will never brook any interference with her affairs by any country, however friendly."¹⁴⁰

The last part of the policy statement should be seen in the perspective of the Socialist Party's commitment to the concept of "third camp" in international affairs, of which Lohia was the author. Elaborating this formula, which Lohia and the French socialist leader, Leon Blum, had forged long before the word nonalignment was put into circulation, the policy statement observed that "the international idea is today visited by the domination of two powerful states, each with its own satellites, seeking to divide the world...into two warring camps." To counter this, it was necessary to create "a genuine international order." And this "can be attained," the policy statement maintained, "only by a bloc of nations which stay independent of these two powers." It also sought to remind the world that "the Indian people already laid the foundations of the third camp through their policy and action in the war years."¹⁴¹

The socialists gave themselves the accoutrements of a full-fledged political party at the 1947 Kanpur conference. The policy statement—which carried the imprint of Jayaprakash—they adopted made it sufficiently clear that the party's preoccupation was to establish that Marxism was

¹⁴⁰*Policy Statement*, Socialist Party, Bombay, 1947, pp 6-8, 14-17, 45-77.

¹⁴¹*Ibid*, p 42.

its breath of life. Apparently the socialists, at any rate a majority of them, did not bother themselves about the point that their understanding of Marxism would not fit the basic formulations of Marx. Even a cursory look at the policy statement suggests that the party's main thrust was at the Communist Party and not Congress. This surely did not go unnoticed. It could be that the party was either oblivious of the fact that Congress was its chief opponent or it deliberately focused on the Communist Party, believing Congress to be the less innocuous of the two contending ideological systems, liberal bourgeois democracy and communism.

Still, it did not strike the right note vis-a-vis the Patel-led conservative segment of the Congress leadership, which controlled the organisation and all along had no patience with the socialists. What with this and the fast approaching transfer of power, it was only to be expected that the Congress conservatives wished to see the last of the socialists, no matter what Gandhi and Nehru might desire. And Gandhi was much too realistic not to appreciate that power was a strange alchemy which could metamorphose men and institutions into something entirely different from what they might once have been. He was not unaware that Congress, particularly after its meek acceptance of partition, had run its course and was almost beyond salvage. As for Nehru, power was the most important issue to him at that point, and he knew that the socialists would not be of much use to him in securing it.

This was not unknown to the leading socialists, particularly Jayaprakash, who formulated the party line. Still, opinions differed on the timing to sever the umbilical chord with Congress. Lohia and Narendra Deva were the most important among those who preferred not to hustle the party into immediate separation. Their calculations plausibly were that political conditions in the country were still fluid, and the socialists should therefore wait until a relatively clear picture of the direction and orientation of Congress politics emerged.

Secondly, since the party had yet to find its feet, it should apply all its energies to consolidating its position

as well as to cultivating the sort of Congressmen who might be useful to it. Equally, if not more, important was the fact that socialists at that time dominated the Congress organisation in the United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh. This was a vantage-ground they did not want to divest themselves of, particularly when the understanding was that they had not yet exhausted their efforts to enlarge their base in Congress. Of those who advocated that the party should get along under its own steam, Jayaprakash and Asoka Mehta stood in the forefront. While Mehta's conflict with the Congress Party managers in Bombay provoked him to insist on leaving it at the earliest, Jayaprakash's conception of Marxism egged him on to the same course.

Raising the question whether it would help the socialists to "build up a socialist India by remaining within Congress or by working outside it," Jayaprakash said, in an article in early January 1948, that Congress was being pulled by diverse forces in different directions. Some of these, according to Jayaprakash, appeared "to pull it in the direction of socialism." Also, he said, many Congressmen "whom we may describe as Gandhians...are in sympathy with democratic socialism." This also applied to "Pandit Nehru and Moulana Azad." Last but not least, Jayaprakash emphasised, "there is Gandhi, who...is a socialist in his own original way...for some of us love and admiration for Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru are not circumscribed by Marxian dogma or the party line, it was and is not an easy task to disregard their advice."

That was one of the principal reasons why, Jayaprakash confessed, the socialists had so long tried to function from within Congress against heavy odds. But this could not go on indefinitely, particularly when "Congress has become a power and personal advancement...vested interests within it have grown and are fast growing, and with them corruption and jobbery." This disturbing state of affairs was, as Jayaprakash saw it, "due mainly to the middle class character of Congress." He further observed that "it is not so much the capitalist interests that have already

captured Congress as of middle-class selfishness that obstructs its way towards socialism." And, as he understood it, that made "even Mahatma Gandhi feel so helpless in stopping the rot that is spreading so fast."

This also explained why Nehru, though Prime Minister, "finds himself checked and thwarted." Conditions were so depressing that Jayaprakash did not think that anything could be done to make Congress "change structurally." In the circumstances, he felt the only sensible course open to the socialists was to come out of Congress and devote themselves to creating "a real socialist party."¹⁴²

The argument Jayaprakash advanced in support of the Socialist Party's withdrawal from Congress looked cogent. But the problem was that the line he prescribed was not ideologically determined. He wanted the party to leave Congress not so much because there was little or no common ground between the two, but because "middle-class" elements in Congress had corrupted it. He did not take his stand upon the fact that the Socialist Party, as he claimed, was committed to Marxism while Congress was essentially a bourgeois organisation, and they were therefore irreconcilable.

The violent removal of Gandhi from the scene was a great divide in Indian politics. In a way this tragedy, as we have earlier observed, forced to the surface, among other things, the sharp lines of cleavage between Jayaprakash and Lohia. And these were the two men who set the pace in the Indian socialist movement. By their words and deeds they left nobody in doubt about the men and ideas, often mutually hostile, that enjoyed their respective sympathies. The unfolding scenario showed that Jayaprakash stood in his own light; he even allowed himself to be used to stoke the embers of conflict between Nehru and Patel. The fact that Jayaprakash was in rapport with Nehru did not endear him to a good number of socialists, particularly Lohia and his friends. The impact of this on the socialist movement was eventually devastating.

Gandhi's death removed whatever factors might have

¹⁴²Jayaprakash Narayan, "Will the Socialists leave Congress?", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 78-82.

inhibited the socialists from terminating their long association with Congress. At the party's sixth conference at Nasik in April 1948, it was decided that the socialists should immediately withdraw from Congress. Giving his reasons for this, Jayaprakash, the general secretary of the party, said the prevalent situation was entirely different from what it had been when Gandhi was alive. With his death, a change for the worse had taken place in Congress.

Jayaprakash argued that reactionary forces were trying to establish their hegemony in Congress. Worse still, he averred, some Congress leaders were exhibiting an unconcealed tendency to authoritarianism. These elements were so strongly entrenched in Congress that efforts to alter the relation of forces would inevitably prove futile. It was therefore necessary that the socialists establish their separate identity and combat these forces to the best of their power. Also, said Jayaprakash, this would strengthen the hands of the good friends the socialists had in Congress. The socialists had all along identified Patel and Nehru as the spokesmen respectively for the reactionary and radical wings in Congress. Jayaprakash's correspondence with Patel from August 1947 (see appendix G and H) would clearly reveal this. The two men were given to crossing each other almost on every important issue, and that caused not a little bitterness.

In his report to the Nasik conference Jayaprakash observed that the "total result" of the socialists' work within Congress had been that they were able to act "as a check on the politics of compromise." Not only that, they strengthened the organisation as an instrument of struggle" and succeeded in generating "a climate of socialism" in Congress. This explained why most Congressmen preferred to be identified as socialists. That this was mere wishful thinking not even the most incorrigible optimist could deny, for Congress and the socialists were on mutually exclusive wavelengths. But then Jayaprakash was not immune from discovering virtues where none existed.

Jayaprakash dwelt long on the reasons why the socialists should come out of Congress. Citing one instance out of many, he referred to the amended constitution of Cong-

ress which forbade any organised group to function within it. More important, Jayaprakash thought, Congress minus Gandhi had ceased to be a platform the socialists could put to use purposively. His argument was that "the presence of Gandhi in our midst was a powerful guarantee of civil liberties and people's freedoms. In his absence the dangers of authoritarianism and totalitarianism have grown. These dangers would be further accentuated if there were no opposition party." The logic of the situation demanded that the socialists leave Congress and constitute a meaningful opposition party.

This of course should not eclipse the fact that, as Jayaprakash stated, "there is much in common between Congress and the Socialist Party; their faith in secular democracy brings them nearer together than any other two parties in the country. ... When we leave Congress we shall leave behind many friends and valued comrades with whom our bonds of personal and ideological attachment will never snap." The substantive part of his peroration was that the socialists would do everything to strengthen such Congress. Indeed, he stressed, "even when working outside it shall be our endeavour to strengthen their hands."¹⁴³

Jayaprakash was in two minds. Pressed by some colleagues, Mehta in particular, he precipitated the question of the party's withdrawal from Congress, accusing it of all manner of misdeeds. At the same time, he declared that the socialists had much in common with many Congressmen and would never desert them. His reference to friends in Congress obviously meant Nehru and men of his persuasion. To cap it all, encouraged by Mehta he started once again some years later a dialogue with Nehru to facilitate all-purpose cooperation, governmental and otherwise, between Congress and the Socialist Party. We shall discuss the different facets of this at the appropriate place.

Another aspect of his thesis at the Nasik conference

¹⁴³Jayaprakash Narayan, "Looking Back", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *Ibid*, p 85, 91, 93.

caused much controversy. Even as he emphasised the party's Marxist identity, he stressed the importance of the question of ends and means, the need for a spiritual re-orientation of thinking. This prompted not a few socialists to prick up their ears. As he put it, "In the West, opposition parties do not consider it wrong to use lies and falsehood to bring the rival party into disrepute. ... There are certain parties which go much beyond lies and corruption. For them, even murder, loot and arson are a part of political strategy."

Stretching his argument further, he observed: "From time immemorial there have been politicians who have preached that there is no such thing as ethics in politics. In the old times, however, this amorality did not spread its corrupting influence beyond a small class that played at politics and the mass of the people were left uncorrupted by what the leaders and ministers of state did. But since the rise of totalitarianism, which includes both fascism, Nazism and Stalinism, this principle has been applied on a mass scale and every individual in society has been affected by it. ... Since the victory of Stalinist methods in Russia, it has been commonly believed that there is no room for moral values in Marxism, and it is usual for a socialist who talks of such matters to be branded as a renegade or, at the least, a deviationist. I should therefore like to state in the clearest possible terms that I for one have come to believe that for the achievement of socialism a strict regard for means is of the highest importance."

Jayaprakash then turned his attention to the essential part of his theme. He observed that "there were many things that Mahatma Gandhi taught us. But the greatest thing he taught us was that means are ends, that evil means can never lead to good ends and that fair ends require fair means. Some of us may have been sceptical of this truth [this clearly was, more than anything else, an allusion to his own approach to the issue in the past], but recent world events and events at home have convinced me that nothing but good means will enable us to reach the goal of a good

society, which is socialism."¹⁴⁴

Once again he touched on the issue of relations between the Socialist and the Communist parties. He told his colleagues they should have no illusions about the basic differences between the two. That being so, "unity with the Communist Party must be resolutely ruled out if the Socialist Party seriously believes in freedom and democratic socialism."¹⁴⁵ Lest this should be interpreted as indicative of his softness about Congress, he went on record with a hard-hitting statement that puzzled even some of his unquestioning supporters. Thinking aloud on the political scene as it appeared to him on Independence Day, 1948, he said: "Except for the few 'carpet-baggers,' independence has turned into dust in the mouth of the people. ... Democracy should have been the most cherished ideal of free India. But the liberties of the people are today far more at the mercy of the government than even under British rule. The citizen is less independent, thanks to the public safety acts, after a year of independence than he was in the days of slavery.... Totalitarianism is gathering force."¹⁴⁶

This was no music in the ears of those who knew what colonialism was and who had also worked for the country's freedom. To be told that civil liberties were more imperilled in independent India than in the colonial days was not quite agreeable fare. Particularly when the realities of life created a different impression. And their bewilderment was made worse when they found Jayaprakash doling out unsolicited certificates to Indian democracy on and off in the future.

What Jayaprakash said, as the party's general secretary, in his report to its seventh conference, held at Patna from 7 to 10 March 1949, clearly indicates that he was in search of a tool that might enable the socialists to res-

¹⁴⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, "Means and Ends", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *op cit*; pp 95-96.

¹⁴⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "Left Unit", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 3, *op cit*; p 173.

¹⁴⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "Stock Taking", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, p 95, 98.

pond to the challenge of Congress in the changed context. He seriously contemplated taking the party on an entirely different tack. He planned to give it an ideological direction and orientation largely determined by Gandhian ideas. He also endeavoured to interpret Marxism, considering that it apparently still constituted one of the basic elements that made up the party's ideological mix, in a manner that would harmonise with his approach. That this failed to find many takers did not go unnoticed. In point of fact, this only exacerbated ideological confusion and dissensions in the party.

The thrust of his activity at the Patna conference was that the question of ends and means, democracy and Gandhian principles should condition the party's political line. For tactical reasons he was prepared to let this have a bit of Marxist icing, no more. The Communist Party's resort to the politics of insurgency, pursuant to the decision the 1948 Calcutta meet of the South and Southeast Asia communist parties had arrived at, did not leave Jayaprakash unaffected. His innate nationalism and his concern for the democratic fabric of the Indian polity influenced his thinking to no small extent.

This was amply reflected in his report to the conference, which said he had been "ridiculed" for his reference to the "purity of means" at the Nasik conference. This, he said, was a wrong approach to the issue. In fact "our means must be good if we wish to attain noble ends. We talk about the decadence of Congress.... But mere criticism of Congress will not lead us anywhere.... It pains me to observe that we have not behaved as we ought to have in the matter of trade union and party accounts, etc. These may appear to be trivial things. Yet they are important. That is why I made a pointed reference to means and ends. ... I do not believe in doctrinaire philosophy. When I talk about the principles Gandhiji stood for, his teaching and practice and the lessons these have for the socialist movement, I am quite serious.... I feel this has a direct bearing on our ideas. There is much confusion in the socialist movement the world over. We are still moving in the old ruts....

"Gandhiji tried to evolve a new method of social change. He preached a new set of values that promised a way out of the blind alley in which society found itself. Jayaprakash emphasised that this must not be sneered at "by calling it surrender to Gandhism. If we remain dogmatic we will end up not by establishing socialism but by a party dictatorship.... Then there is the question of democratic socialism. Some of you openly ridicule the word 'democratic.' They say that the deep red of socialism has been rendered pink by the word democratic."

But Jayaprakash had a different understanding of socialism which did not "merely mean solving the problem of bread," nor did it have "only an economic content... there can be no real socialism without complete democracy. Marx and Lenin had both said that democracy and socialism are inseparable... We must accept democracy and all that it stands for, for thus alone can we reach the goal of socialism. Democratic socialism involves acceptance of democratic means, peaceful methods and constructive approach in the attainment of our goal. No Marxist can say that democracy and socialism are contradictory."¹⁴⁷

Jayaprakash was not alone among the builders of the Socialist Party who almost unqualifiedly accepted Gandhian politics. Achyut Patwardhan, one of the top leaders of the underground resistance to the British at the time of the Quit India struggle, said in moving the official political resolution at the conference: "To talk about insurrection today is not revolutionary politics. It is the surest way of playing into the hands of reaction. This does not mean that we should submit to repression and injustice. The path which Gandhiji followed is not less revolutionary. Yet if we want to avoid chaos, there is no other way."¹⁴⁸ This almost exclusive emphasis on Gandhi probably reflected, for one thing, a desire to avoid total confrontation with Congress, notwithstanding the party's apparently unreserved condemnation of it. Neither the

¹⁴⁷Report of the Seventh Annual Conference of the Socialist Party, Patna 1949, pp 47-50.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid*; p 58.

socialists nor Congressmen could possibly disown the common factor of nationalism that influenced their respective approaches to men and events. For another, the party's apprehensions about the Communist Party might also have contributed to this.

And Jayaprakash made it clear that he was for building the Socialist Party on the pattern of the British Labour Party. While pleading for acceptance of the draft of the new party constitution he said he had "studied" "the constitutions of socialist parties of other countries" and found that "the British Labour Party pattern appealed to me.... There are many things which we can learn from that party."¹⁴⁹

Let us look briefly at what Lohia said to his party men at the Patna conference. The resolution "On the Move" which he placed before the conference said: "Two years have elapsed since the achievement of national freedom but nothing has changed in any significant way. On the contrary, one change for worse has taken place. Faith is broken.... People had thought that after the departure of the British there will be a social revolution in India. But what do we see today? There is an unparalleled shattering of people's hopes."

Lohia's answer to the multifaceted problem of social change and poverty was that "landlordism" must be "abolished" and "land redistributed." Emphasising the need for "small-scale industries," he suggested the creation of a "land army." This should be "raised, housed, clothed and fed by the government in order to bring millions of new virgin acres under cultivation."

Demanding "nationalisation of banks, insurance, mining, power and British assets," he said *gram panchayat* must become pivot of our rural economy" and that "a new conception of four-pillar state" would have to be evolved. He reminded the conference of "the great hunger for equality and prosperity.... The people must become seized with this hunger for equality." And his answer to the anticipated question "What should be done if the gov-

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p 74.

ernment do not accept our programme?" was that "if we have sufficiently galvanised the people and mobilised them, and the government still refuse to implement the programme, then as a last resort we can remove the government through *satyagraha*. So long as there is injustice and inequality a resort will have to be made to *satyagraha*, though we don't want it for its own sake."¹⁵⁰

This was one of the basic points of difference between Lohia and Jayaprakash and it persisted all through, eventually leading to the break up of the party. Lohia was convinced that the character of Congress being what it was the Socialist Party would fail to justify its existence if it did not involve itself in continuous and active protest, which he practised at the personal level too, against the government's every act of misrule and injustice.

Jayaprakash also harped on this note frequently, but he never practised it personally after India became free. Between his withdrawal from active politics in the mid-1950s and the Bihar movement in 1974 the course of Jayaprakash's life moved in a direction away from active opposition to the many political, social and economic wrongs and oppressions which, according to him, authority had committed. All his expressions of dissent, of protest remained limited to the abstract, except when the government took him into custody after the declaration of emergency in 1975. Lohia did not, unlike Jayaprakash, indulge in the luxury of periodic exercise to locate areas of agreement with Congress.

At the party's Madras conference in 1950 Jayaprakash went a step further to divest the party of the remaining vestiges of Marxism and superimposed on it his concept of socialism. The socialism of his understanding was essentially an eclectic exercise, the direction of which was determined mainly by Gandhian precepts, the emphasis being on the interrelationship of ends and means, and West European social democratic practices. In no uncertain language he told the conference that "the Socialist Party is not patterned after maxims mechanically lifted out of

¹⁵⁰*Ibid*, pp 138-41.

Marxian textbooks." Emphasising that "democratic socialism" had come "to be inscribed...indelibly on its [the party] banner," he castigated the socialist who "with a smattering of the obvious writings of Marx-Engels-Lenin" fondly believed that "the issue of democratic socialism is ...a fruitless repetition of the issue settled long ago at Zimmerwald." Such a person, according to Jayaprakash, "mentally...still lives in the age when one contrasted the failures of European social democracy with the brilliant success of Lenin."

The root of this confusion could be traced to the fact that "socialist theories are more real" to such persons "than socialist values, to achieve which those theories were evolved," Jayaprakash observed. It was wrongly assumed that "the theories will inevitably lead to the values." Therefore, "when theories become a state religion," it automatically followed that "the values had been realised and socialism established on earth." Nothing could be farther than the truth, Jayaprakash said, because socialism could not merely be equated with anti-capitalism or statism.

Much as "nationalisation of industry and collectivisation of agriculture are important aspects of socialist economy... in themselves they are not socialism." Even in such a state, he said, "there may be exploitation, injustice, oppression, insecurity and glaring inequalities. If in such an economy all political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of a party oligarchy, irreplaceable and self-perpetuating, there can be no socialism but its suppression, no revolution but reaction. The communist, in as much as he believes in and works for just such an oligarchical society, is a reactionary rather than a revolutionary."

By way of elaborating his own conception of socialism, Jayaprakash said that "the aims of the socialist movement ...were not mere overthrow of the capitalist order and establishment of a party dictatorship, but the creation of a society of free and equal peoples, a society based on certain values of human and social life; values which could never be sacrificed in the name of theory or the party line

or expediencies of any sort." These were his words which indicated that the trend of his thought was away from that of most of his colleagues in the party.

The idiom he used also reflected the mood of the intellectuals who had thought that Soviet Russia would be a beacon but who were subsequently disillusioned. Therein could be located the relevance of his reference to one of the authors of *God that Failed*. Values were more important to Jayaprakash than anything else and he was in good company. At any rate, that is what he felt. As he put it, "in the noble words of Ignazio Silone: 'On a group of theories one can found a school; but on a group of values one can found a culture, a civilization, a new way of living together among men.' Socialism is not just a school of thought, but a new culture, a new civilization."

As regards the "method to be used to achieve socialism," Jayaprakash observed that "it is as un-Marxian to hold that only an armed revolution can lead to socialism as to assert that only a peaceful method can do so." He contended that either method could be employed. The correct Marxian way of deciding the issue should be "only by the relevant historical and objective conditions." It was his understanding that the situation was "all in favour of a peaceful evolution of socialism. The forces of socialism are incomparably stronger today than in the last quarter of the 19th century." Jayaprakash had a more significant message to convey. In sharp contrast to what he had said on Independence Day in 1948, he stated that "in India, in spite of the limitations on civil liberties and the Preventive Detention Act...there is a large scope for the democratic forms of political activity...if Marxian methodology were to be applied to India it would be the democratic method that would have to be selected."¹⁵¹

It may be mentioned that sharp differences of opinion on certain basic issues of policy surfaced at the Madras conference in 1950 which Lohia deliberately did not attend. Other things apart, he took strong exception to the

¹⁵¹Jayaprakash Narayan; *Democratic Socialism*, Socialist Party, Bombay, 1950, pp 5-10.

party's endorsement of the government's support to the United Nations resolution on the Korean conflict. Lohia's argument was that this ran counter to the party's policy declaring that capitalism and communism were equally irrelevant to the socialist movement.

According to Lohia, who had formulated this policy, the "theory of equal irrelevance must not be confused with the doctrine of equal evil.... This does not set itself upon a high moral pedestal from where to judge and denounce; it is perfectly aware of the imperishable glory of the existing civilisation and its achievement of social equality which was never before reached by any earlier civilisation The theory of equal irrelevance is the decision of the traveller on a new road, who refuses to be tempted by the two other roads that go round and round and lead nowhere."¹⁵² Jayaprakash and Lohia, the two men who could mould the Indian socialist movement into an effective tool for building a new society, seemed destined to travel in diametrically opposite directions. The beginning of the tragic dissipation of the party had commenced.

The process of germination of the seeds of confusion which had been planted in the party was given a fresh filip by Jayaprakash's observations published a few months before independent India's first general election. In an attempt to delineate the country's "political trends," he said that the "rapid disintegration of Congress is creating a political vacuum." It was necessary to fill this vacuum. He was of the opinion there were "three groups of forces that are aspiring to fill up the place of Congress." Identifying these forces, he said the first group, which represented "the forces of reaction," was "trying to take the country backwards...towards fascism...feudal rule...a non-secular and communal state, towards national disintegration." The political and non-political organisations which spoke for this group included, among others, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and the All India Jagirdars and Landlords Association.

¹⁵²Rammanohar Lohia, "The Doctrinal Foundation of Socialism", *op cit*; pp 46-47.

The second group consisted essentially of the "forces of democracy, of social revolution and peace ... of democratic socialism and Gandhism." And they "stand for social revolution and not merely for social reform. These both aim to...establish a classless socialist society." Stating that the "forces of Gandhism, since their break with Congress, have no political expression" and that the Socialist Party represented the "forces of democratic socialism," he regretted the climate of "suspicion" which stood between them. His understanding was that "lack of objectivity on both sides" was responsible for this, that "the names of Marx and Gandhi often act as barriers and the issue of violence—even theoretical violence—confuses all other issues." But he firmly believed, their apparently differing views notwithstanding, their "broad agreement on social and economic goals and the demands of practical work are bound to nation and every attempt to drag India into the American bring these forces ever nearer."

The third group comprised "the various 'left' parties that believe in totalitarianism...advocate civil war as the only means of accomplishing the social revolution...advocate international war by seeking to line up India behind Soviet Russia in the struggle for world mastery." And he made it clear that the Communist Party stood at "the top of these forces." In the same breath he said that though the Socialist Party had "no ill-will for Russia," it would "resist every attempt to make India a Russian satellite." For that matter, the party would "oppose American domination."

Having characterised Congress as a status quoist force, Jayaprakash made certain observations which would indicate that he had not quite consigned Congress to limbo. On the contrary, his scheme of things included the possibility of Congress enjoying his support in a given context. He felt "it should be obvious that the reactionary and fascist forces must not be allowed to grow. It should also be obvious that when the choice is between Congress and these reactionary forces, it is the first that must be supported."

If this was not of much help in clarifying certain conflicting issues in the party, his categorical views on *sarvodaya* and the close relations between socialism and Gandhian values only made matters worse. As he put it, "the *sarvodaya* plan¹⁵³ ... is no wishy-washy sentimentalism but a concrete programme of basic social resolution. Outside the conventional socialist circles, it is the first attempt to picture concretely a new social order. Socialists, particularly scientific socialists...must view these attempts with sympathy and try to understand and draw near to a group of persons than whom no more devoted servants of the people can be found...the *sarvodaya* plan ...contains 80 percent of the immediate programme of the Socialist Party, besides sharing [the] common ideal of a classless and casteless society." And Jayaprakash was confident that "if this [*sarvodaya*] plan were implemented it would take us a long way indeed towards socialism."

To the anticipated question why a Socialist Party was necessary "if the *sarvodaya* plan itself is sufficient"—his answer was that the Gandhian constructive workers were "not politicians and they had no political party of their own." It was therefore in the fitness of things that the constructive workers and the Socialist Party join hands, so that they may implement the *sarvodaya* plan and thus help to "create a new social order." Of course, he added, socialism meant much more than just the *sarvodaya* plan. But he did not see any reason why "the further content of socialism" should be "unacceptable to the constructive workers."

He then came to the most significant aspect of his message. The party would do well to remember, he cautioned, that "socialism in the country would neglect Gandhism

¹⁵³Towards the end of February 1948, Gandhi's politically nonattached followers decided to convene a constructive workers' meeting at Wardha to prepare a programme on the basis of Gandhian principles of national reconstruction and place it before the people and the government. Though Gandhi died, about 200 of his followers met at Wardha and formally adopted the *sarvodaya* plan, which was published on 30 January 1950.

at its peril.... Gandhi was a social revolutionary of an exceptionally original kind.... The first aspect of Gandhism that must interest the socialist is its moral or ethical basis, its insistence on value.... The values of individual and social life that socialism strives to achieve and make the basis of a new civilisation also constitute the foundation of a Gandhism society."¹⁵⁴

It was no secret to the perceptive observer that Jayaprakash was groping for a way out of a political crisis that was building up. He was not happy with the state of affairs in the party. His conflict, partly personal, was mainly with Lohia regarding the ideological content of the party's brand of socialism, its theory and methodology. Lohia was looked upon as an innovative theoretician, a man whose understanding of the party's ideological problem as well as of Congress politics did not, unlike Jayaprakash, apparently suffer from any confusion. He was known for his insistence on adapting socialism to the Indian context and giving it a doctrinal base that would permit both socialism and democracy to obtain in society.

On the other hand, Jayaprakash was the country's most charismatic leader after Nehru, and yet he could not bend the party to his will. And his ideological confusion took on a new dimension when he talked in terms of ethical and moral values in the almost amoral world of party politics. After all, he could not possibly escape from himself; he had to reconcile the contradictions inherent in his profession and practice. For instance, as the party's biggest fund raiser he collected substantial sums from traders and industrialists, most of whom obviously did not bother themselves about the ends and means question when it came to making a pile. And Jayaprakash surely was not unaware of the not quite clean means by which the money he collected had been made. That was only one aspect of his private conflict, while the public posture was about the place of ethics and morals in politics.

Unlike Lohia, Jayaprakash had an inclination to rationalise away his thought and action. To grasp the point,

¹⁵⁴Jayaprakash Narayan; *Political Trends*; Socialist Party, Bombay, (reprinted), 1951, pp 1-3, 12-16.

reference might be made to his attitude to the violence-nonviolence polemics. He was wont to talk unfailingly, particularly after the death of Gandhi, of the importance of consistent relations between ends and means to the extent that means should justify ends and not the other way round. For that matter, he was never tired of emphasising the importance of nonviolence in politics. But there were more occasions than one when his deeds could not be reconciled with what he professed.

Come to think of it, his emphasis on purity of means, on nonviolence in thought and action, did not seem to have any immediate relevance to his approach to everyday politics. Apparently, it did not occur to him that Gandhi's conception of nonviolence was something more than just a talking point. Jayaprakash appeared to have lost sight of the fact that Gandhi could "put meaning into nonviolence," as Lohia so succinctly expressed it, "only because he linked it up with the people's desire for freedom and turned it into a fighting weapon."¹⁵⁵ But it could not be said of Jayaprakash that he used nonviolence at any point between attaining freedom and launching the Bihar movement in 1974 as a tool of people's struggle against exploitation and injustice. On the contrary, it may even be suggested that he all along operated at two mutually antagonistic levels.

It may not be unrewarding if an attempt is made to see in its right perspective his defence of and role in people's struggles, not necessarily nonviolent, for freedom. The idea is that this may perhaps facilitate an answer to the question whether Jayaprakash, especially after he renounced Marxism, short-circuited on and off his self-imposed set of Gandhian values and principles to achieve the immediate objective at the cost of the distant, whether he was really true to himself when he talked in terms of the close relations between politics and ethics, and of ends and means.

In other words, was nonviolence merely a convenient tool to be used as and when the situation permitted, his

¹⁵⁵Rammanohar Lohia; "An Asian Policy", *op cit*; p 23.

espousal of Gandhian philosophy just a facade, a tactical exercise? What indeed was his ultimate standard of values? Did he avoid facing the question when it came to moral choice?

Even as late as in April 1946, Jayaprakash publicly declared that he was not bothered overmuch about the violence—nonviolence debate. He was very critical of those who castigated the freedom fighter who resorted to violence in the 1942 Quit India movement. Giving vent to his feelings, he observed in April 1946: "The revolution of 1942 was the greatest after that of 1857. ... However mistaken we might have been in the eyes of Gandhiji and the Congress High Command, the people approve of what we did ... I was really pained to hear that many of our great leaders, when released from jail, hastened to publicly criticise what they considered mistakes committed during the 1942 revolution. I have every respect for their advice, but they also committed a great mistake."

This mistake was that "while raising the standard of revolt they did not prepare the country for the fight.... Except Jawaharlal Nehru, who has admitted this mistake, others have failed to do so.... In certain parts of the country, especially in a western province, there is a move to brand as traitors those who fought during the 1942 revolution and did not conform to Gandhiji's ideal of nonviolence I bow my head before Gandhiji's ideal of *ahimsa* [nonviolence]. I would act according to it if I possessed that moral strength which makes a true and a brave *satyagrahi*. I find it difficult to act up to a brave man's nonviolence. I find it easier to fight with a gun. Twice during the last war the Congress Working Committee discarded Gandhiji's ideal of nonviolence and his leadership. On August 8, 1942, at the AICC session in Bombay, Moulana Azad had declared that if there was a national government the Indians would fight against the Japanese. Is violence nonviolence if it is directed against the Japanese? If we would fight the Japanese why should we not fight against the British? The fact is that *ahimsa* is being exploited for power poli-

tics inside Congress."¹⁵⁶

India's emancipation from bondage could be said to have been a watershed in the evolution of Jayaprakash's political thinking. Other noticeable change apart, he declared his firm adherence to Gandhi's thinking on the issue of ends and means and nonviolence. Time and again he returned to this theme. He argued and debated with his friends and associates; he appealed to and exhorted the people not to dismiss the whole thing as an academic exercise irrelevant to political realities. That was the most important aspect of his report to the party conference at Patna in 1949.

That was also one of the basic ingredients of his message to the first Asian Socialist Conference at Rangoon in January 1953. Addressing the impressive assemblage of delegates from various Asian countries and observers from a number of African and West European countries, Jayaprakash said: "I am afraid that the commonly accepted philosophy of Marxism, a philosophy accepted by many socialists, including the Stalinists, is based on amorality, a philosophy that does not take into account the question of good or evil, a philosophy that regards this question as relative to such an extent that these considerations can completely be disregarded if the immediate purpose were to be served in that manner."

Referring to Lohia's concept of "test of immediacy" he observed: "If your present action is in consonance with the ideals that you have before you, there is no doubt where we would ultimately land ourselves. ... If on the other hand ... our present values contradict ultimate values, there is no rational ground for supposing that we will by some dialectical contrivance ultimately arrive at that goal. Therefore ... I should emphasise that the socialist movement, along with the economic and political and social programmes, must also have a programme which includes this question of values."

In the course of that fairly lengthy address the point

¹⁵⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Revolution of 1942", *Towards Total Revolution*; Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 48-50.

Jayaprakash sought to underline was that "if we are going to establish a democratic society, we should follow democratic means, of course if those means are available to us. But democratic means are not always available. They are not available in a country where there is a civil war going on. However, if democratic opportunities do exist, it should be our concern to see that we function democratically. ... When I speak of democratic methods ... I am not speaking only of parliamentary methods, of constitutional methods. I am also thinking in terms of vital, large, mass movement, mass action of a nonviolent character, unconstitutional but at the same time peaceful."¹⁵⁷

He did not allow the matter to rest here. With a note of finality he said "We in the socialist movement of India are trying to develop a technique for the achievement of socialism based on the best possible modern weapon, namely, nonviolence and truth."¹⁵⁸

But a look at the other side of the picture reveals that Jayaprakash was one of the principal organisers of the armed resistance movement of 1948 against the Razakar menace in the Nizam's Hyderabad and supporters of the state's merger with India. He extended unreserved assistance to the armed revolution in Nepal in 1950-51. Also he supported Tunisia's armed liberation struggle in the early 1950s and Bangladesh's fight for freedom in 1971.

To begin at the beginning. It was early 1948. Freedom had yet to take root in India. Integration of some 562 princely states¹⁵⁹ into the mainstream of national life was one of the most complex problems confronting the country. Thanks to the stick and carrot approach of Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, the maharajas, rajas and nawabs did not take long to appreciate that they had no alternative to casting in their lot

¹⁵⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, *Ideological Problems of Socialism* (An Asian Socialist Publication, Asian Socialist Conference, Rangoon 1953, p 4, 6, 14.

¹⁵⁸See Report of the First Asian Socialist Conference; *ibid*; p 11.

¹⁵⁹The total area and population of the princely states were 716,000 square miles and 93 million respectively.

with the rest of the country. Except, of course, one wizened old man, said to be the world's second richest, who kept vigil over his domain in Hyderabad. The Nizam's state had an area of 82,000 square miles and a population of 16 million, 85 percent of them Hindus.

The seventh man to fall heir to the Asafjahi throne, the ruling Nizam-ul-Moolk Mir Usman Ali Khan stubbornly refused to accede to India. He toyed with the idea of an independent, sovereign Hyderabad, his two major props being the creator of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and conservative Britons like Conrad Corfield who at that time oversaw the Indian government's Political Department. Even though hard logic and geopolitical realities made it evident that Hyderabad belonged to India, the Nizam could not care less. He casually dismissed New Delhi's repeated appeals not to fly in the face of reason.

The men who ruled the roast in Hyderabad struck terror into the state's people, virtually entrusting the administrative apparatus to Kasim Razvi, president of the morbidly communal Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen. Razvi had rigged up an armed mafia, otherwise known as Razakars, comprising Pathan and Arab mercenaries. With each passing day the situation in Hyderabad took a turn for the worse. On 1 June 1948 the Governor-General of Pakistan deliberately referred to Hyderabad as "an independent sovereign state."

This was not the only incident which prompted Patel to conclude that Hyderabad would continue to be "a cancer in the belly of India"¹⁶⁰ until it could be unburdened of the despotic rule of the Nizam. Prime Minister Nehru was also quite clear on the issue. He had no doubt that "to try to avoid trouble," in the words of Alan Campbell-Johnson, "was often the best way of inviting it. It was not possible to go on just watching shooting incidents and other disorders that were taking place daily on the Hyderabad

¹⁶⁰V.B. Kulkarni; *The Indian Triumvirate: A Political Biography of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1969, pp 430-31.

border."¹⁶¹

Tyranny and oppression increased in geometrical progression. The Hyderabad regime had meanwhile lavished considerable funds on buying arms abroad to put an edge on its fighting machine, which had a total strength of about 45,000 regular soldiers, 200,000 Razakars and a large body of Kafri and Pathan militiamen.

The Nizam evidently had reckoned without the people of Hyderabad, who decided to face the challenge. In keeping with its tradition, the Hyderabad State Congress, of which Ramanand Tirth was the undisputed leader, took to the path of nonviolent struggle. The local socialists, though formally associated with the state Congress, opted for armed resistance to the regime.¹⁶²

To set the record straight, mention must be made of the Congress Socialist Party's formal resolution on the issue, the initiative taken by Jayaprakash and Lohia, and the role the party militants played. Lohia was chairman of the party's States Committee, which was entrusted with implementing the party's policy regarding the States. Explaining that this policy was essentially rooted in secularism besides other things, Lohia observed: "On the people outside Hyderabad, whether in the provinces or in the princely states, rests an obligation, in particular, to arrange for Muslim participation in the Hyderabad struggle. Not only would this be a great support to the people of Hyderabad but it would also greatly improve Hindu-Muslim relations throughout India and strengthen the secular and democratic base of the Indian state."¹⁶³

To coordinate the resistance movement in different regions of Hyderabad, the States Committee had set up a Hyderabad Struggle Committee with Aruna Asaf Ali as its formal president. At a meeting in December 1946, of

¹⁶¹Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, Jaico, Bombay, 1951, p 267.

¹⁶²I am grateful to Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, for permission to use material from my article "The Days of Razakars" published in its issue of 22 November 1976.

¹⁶³Rammanohar Lohia, "Socialist Policy re: States;" *Janata*; Vol 3 No 13; 18 April 1949, p 12.

the National Executive Committee of the party, of which Jayaprakash was general secretary, this resolution was adopted: "Hyderabad is the worst focus of feudalism in India. ... The National Executive of the Congress Socialist Party is of the opinion that the freedom of India is inconceivable until it includes in its sweep the freeing of the 166 lakhs of the people of Hyderabad. ... Such a struggle becomes urgent today because the Nizam's dominion has been known, in the words of Sir John Malcolm, as the 'centre of gravity of the Indian Empire.'"¹⁶⁴

Jayaprakash's intimate association with the Hyderabad struggle could easily be gleaned from the foreword he wrote for a brochure published by the Hyderabad Struggle Committee. His defence of the resistance in the Nizam's domain was unequivocal, and he made no bones about the fact that he refused to be hamstrung by any extraneous consideration regarding the mode and scope of the struggle. More precisely, he made it clear that he would not waste his time in subtle philosophical argument about issues such as violence and nonviolence, ends and means.

Though somewhat lengthy, that foreword deserves to be reproduced here if not for anything else at least to get an inkling of Jayaprakash's frame of mind at that time: "The fighters in Hyderabad are not 'raiders' [the reference was to the Pakistani raiders in Kashmir] by any stretch of imagination but are the people of the soil who are fighting to protect their hearths and homes and their liberties and to achieve the freedom to which every civilised man is entitled. Swami Ramanand Tirth was and is the leader of the people of Hyderabad and it was under his command and the command of the state Congress, of which the socialists are an integral part, that the Hyderabad struggle has been waged." Defending the Socialist Party's unstinted support to the armed resistance movement in Hyderabad, Jayaprakash observed: "To have refused to run to the aid of...the people who were fighting as it were with their bare hands, was to betray the cause of freedom and

¹⁶⁴*Janata*, Vol 1 No 46, 15 December, p 6.

democracy. Men of goodwill all the world over had hastened to republican Spain to save it from the jaws of international fascism. Millions of people of Hyderabad are in the grip of no lesser a fascist tyranny and I cannot imagine anyone, European or Indian, who is a lover of freedom and who refuses to give all possible aid to the victims of Asafia fascism."¹⁶⁵

The anti-Razakar and pro-merger struggle under the State Congress in Hyderabad had commenced in early 1947. Between September 1946 and May 1947 Jayaprakash and Asoka Mehta visited Hyderabad. For his activities in Hyderabad, the Nizam's government externed Jayaprakash from the state in May 1947. This proved a blessing in disguise. His deep involvement in the struggle persuaded Ramanand Tirth to include some "leaders of the Hyderabad Socialist Party in his Working Committee." The first "political arrest made by the Nizam's government after the State Congress demand for accession to India and full responsible government in July 1947, was that of a socialist, Krishna Dubey...one of the most active workers of the Hyderabad Socialist Party."¹⁶⁶

Injection of a personal note now becomes unavoidable. For what it is worth, I should like to draw a little on my personal experience. At the instance of Lohia I actively participated in the Hyderabad struggle. Sometime in January 1948, Lohia introduced me to Vijendra Kabra, leader of the resistance group in the region adjacent to Aurangabad district. In early 1948, as Lohia desired, I left for Yeola in company with Kabra. I carried whatever arms could be collected locally. The task assigned to me was to train freedom fighters and help them build the resistance movement in the sector.¹⁶⁷

The point to be noted is that "during the struggle the

¹⁶⁵Quoted in *Janata*, Vol 3 No 35, 19 Septembr 1948, pp 3-6.

¹⁶⁶*Janata*; Vol 3 No 16, 9 May 1948, p 5.

¹⁶⁷The Hyderabad struggle eventually came to be recognised as part of India's larger freedom struggle and I was the only non-Maharashtrian recipient of a *sanman patra* which the Government of Maharashtra conferred, in 1976; on those who had participated in it.

socialists never allowed the conflict between ends and means to interfere with their work. Indeed, while openly fighting a ruthless tyrant like the Nizam, whose forces know no moral laws, such considerations appear wholly irrelevant, the termination of oppression alone standing out as the end to be achieved within the shortest possible time."¹⁶⁸

Two things are relatively clear: in the given context the principle underlying this policy could not possibly have been conceived without the consent of the party general secretary, Jayaprakash; and the ends and means issue had no sacrosanctity, the realities on the ground being the major determinants of the party's policy. The relevant point is that there was not much common ground between Jayaprakash's political ethics and Gandhi's when the Quit India struggle found in him the man who would stop at nothing to achieve the goal he had set himself.

But the position had appreciably changed by the time the Hyderabad struggle took place in 1948. Jayaprakash had meanwhile come quite close to Gandhi, and he did not dismiss the ends and means question as irrelevant to society. Yet it was under Jayaprakash's stewardship that the General Council of the Socialist Party assembled at Bikaner in the fourth week of July 1948, barely seven weeks before the Indian Army called the Nizam's bluff, and adopted this resolution: "The Government of India have been doubly guilty of inaction in Hyderabad. While they themselves refused for months to move except to carry on fruitless negotiations, they did not allow others to act effectively. The people of Hyderabad have been struggling bravely against the Nizam's tyranny under the leadership of the State Congress and the state Socialist Party. Not only no effective help has been given to the struggle, but everything was done in the past to belittle it...the General Council is of opinion that the time for half measures in Hyderabad had passed. The Indian people demand of the government effective action, *which can only be military action now.*"¹⁶⁹

Comments are unnecessary. Suffice to say that the Socia-

¹⁶⁸"Socialists and the Hyderabad Struggle", *Janata*, Vol 3 No 16, 9 May 1948, pp 5, 12.

list Party's political line at that time, largely the handiwork of Jayaprakash, was determined more by pragmatism—and pragmatism often is another name for opportunism—and less by the ends and means equation. Gandhi had still to wait in the wings for the return of the prodigal, and Jayaprakash would continue meandering in the realm of ideas for quite some time before he could be said to have accepted Gandhism not merely as an expedient for ceremonial use.

From the very beginning Jayaprakash was deeply involved in every phase of Nepal's struggle for democracy which commenced in earnest in the late 1940s.¹⁷⁰ So also Lohia. The fact is that Jayaprakash's association with the Nepalese struggle, which was nothing if not violent almost all along, continued uninterruptedly till death took him away. Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala, the man who made the 1950-51 Nepalese revolution, was a close associate of both socialist leaders from his student days in India in the early 1930s. Those were Koirala's salad days in politics. His intimate contact with Jayaprakash influenced him to join the Congress Socialist Party.

Until the 1950-51 revolution, engineered by the Nepali Congress and of which Koirala was the undisputed architect, Nepal was a forbidden land living in medieval times. Nominally a monarchy, the Himalayan kingdom was the exclusive preserve of the feudal barons called ranas. The country was politically free, but the people were enslaved by the despotic rana regime which also held the monarch a virtual prisoner. Frustrated in their nonviolent efforts to shake off the stranglehold the feudal regime had put on

¹⁶⁹*Janata*, Vol 3, No 28, 1 August 1948; pp 8, 10. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁰For a detailed account of the 1950-51 Nepalese revolution and subsequent developments see Bhola Chatterji; *A Study of Recent Nepalese Politics* with a foreword by Jayaprakash Narayan; World Press; Calcutta; 1969; *Nepal's Experiment with Democracy* with a forward by B.P. Koirala; Ankur Publishing House; New Delhi; 1977; *Palace People and Politics: Nepal in Perspective* with a forward by B.P. Koirala, Ankur Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, and *Portrait of a Revolutionary. B.P. Koirala* with a forward by B.P. Koirala; Ankur Publishing House; New Delhi; 1982.

them, the Nepalese opted for an armed struggle under Koirala's leadership.

All sorts of not quite unexpected difficulties cropped up while the Nepali Congress was preparing for a showdown. On my first meeting with B P Koirala on 25 July 1950 at the Calcutta residence of Phulan Prasad Verma,¹⁷¹ we discussed the situation in detail. Koirala said that Jayaprakash, and also Lohia, agreed with the Nepali Congress' assessment that the only course open to it was armed struggle. This was of course easier said than done, the Nepali Congress leader conceded. Many operational hurdles had to be overcome before the party could launch a struggle, but procurement of arms proved the most stubborn problem. Every conceivable local source, Koirala revealed, had been tapped for arms, but without avail. Jayaprakash was approached for a solution, and he readily agreed to help.

With Jayaprakash's personal letter to his friend U Ba Swe, then chairman of the Burma Socialist Party (he was also Burma's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister) I went to Rangoon to produce arms for the Nepalese revolutionaries. I also carried a letter from Lohia to U Win, one of the leaders of the Burma Socialist Party and Religious Affairs Minister. In the course of several long discussions with the Burmese socialist leaders, especially U Ba Swe, I was pointedly asked to explain the rationale of the active association of Jayaprakash, otherwise known for his advocacy of nonviolence and Gandhian principles, with the armed struggle in Nepal. Of course Jayaprakash's letter to U Ba Swe worked and he gave the Nepali Congress a plane-load of arms free. Also, Jayaprakash continued to lend his moral support to Koirala in his subsequent struggles against authoritarianism in Nepal. And until he returned in 1976 to Nepal from self-exile in India, Koirala had no qualms about using violence as a tool of struggle.

A French North African colony, Tunisia was engaged in a fierce struggle for freedom in the early 1950s. This coun-

¹⁷¹A freedom fighter and one of Jayaprakash's close associates, Phulan Prasad Verma was a founder-member of the Bihar Socialist Party. He became a Socialist member of post-independence India's Constituent Assembly.

try's outlook for the morrow was gloomy when Tunisia's Neo-Destour Party leaders Habib Bourguiba (he became independent Tunisia's first president and still holds office) and Taieb Slim (he served independent Tunisia in various responsible positions), accompanied by Margaret Pope, came to India in 1951. Lohia had mooted the idea of the Tunisian leaders' visit. Not unexpectedly, Jayaprakash helped them greatly to raise funds for the Tunisian freedom struggle.

Aid to Tunisia committees comprising leaders of most of the country's major political parties were set up in a number of cities, particularly New Delhi and Calcutta. Narendra Deva was president of the Delhi chapter while the Congress leader Atulya Ghosh headed the Calcutta committee.¹⁷²

Of the many socialists who at the behest of Jayaprakash and Lohia worked hard in the cause of the Tunisian liberation struggle, Surendra Saxena was the mainstay of the Delhi committee. Rajendra K Mishra, who now teaches biophysics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, was in the thick of the Calcutta committee's activities. And they all should be able to recollect that Jayaprakash pulled no punches when it came to enlisting popular support for the Tunisian freedom struggle, which indeed forms one of contemporary history's most violent chapters.

Then there is the Bangladesh liberation struggle in terms of man's barbarism to man this perhaps surpasses many other similar struggles. Long before the people of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, fought a remorselessly bloody battle for freedom in 1971, Jayaprakash had quit the socialist movement, in fact active politics, and devoted all his time to *bhoodan* and *sarvodaya* work. *Sarvodaya* was nonviolence *per se*. This was claimed to be the path of principle that promised to lead to the uplands of peace, progress and fraternity only if the people agreed to stick absolutely to a rigid code of moral conduct. Jayaprakash

¹⁷²the author was one of the four secretaries of the Calcutta chapter of the Aid to Tunisia Committee.

was never weary of harping on that theme.

To illustrate the point, reference might be made to his approach to the Indian government's action in Goa in 1961. He made no secret of the fact that he totally opposed the application of force to solve the Goa problem. Giving his reasons for not supporting New Delhi's "military action" in Goa, a shocked Jayaprakash said: "I feel called upon, as one dedicated to the proposition that violence even in a good cause is immoral and an offence against humanity, to express my sorrow that my country had to take recourse of it. Only fourteen years ago, aided by forces of history, we liberated most of our country without taking arms against the foreign ruler. Now, when we are immeasurably stronger and the forces of history too are even more favourable, we have failed to find nonviolent means to free a tiny part of our motherland."¹⁷³

Elaborating his argument, Jayaprakash added: "India is wedded to the policy of peace. And Prime Minister Nehru has been for the past many years...preaching this message to the world...if you look at the question from the point of view of the ruling ethics of the present-day nations there was nothing wrong in what the Government of India did."

But, he observed, "the nations of the world have created an organisation, the United Nations," and its charter "declares that the member nations, whatever be their own mutual quarrels, should never go to war with one another, but solve all their quarrels by peaceful means." As a member of the UN India "is committed to a policy of peace."

In addition to that, Jayaprakash emphasised, "our own Prime Minister has been talking peace to everyone in the world.... And then to go and commit a breach of the peace ourselves. No matter what the justification, what the provocation, how can this be done by a peaceful country?" In the circumstances, he could not deny that "this single act has brought down India and brought down the Prime Minister in the esteem of the world as nothing else had

¹⁷³Quoted in Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards Total Revolution*; Vol 1, *op cit*; p cviii.

done...this single act has made it many times more difficult for our country and our government to be one of the architects of world peace."¹⁷⁴

In an unpublished article in 1969, Jayaprakash stated that "a violent revolution by its very logic turns out every time to be half a revolution. The illusion of success is created by the fact that a 'successful' violent revolution does succeed in destroying the foundations of the old power structure, be it feudalism (France), feudalism-cum-capitalism (Russia) or other. But the remaining half of the revolution—the building up of a new social order in accordance with the revolutionary ideas—gets lost in the new power structure that comes into being. This is never the structure of people's power. The reason is not the betrayal of the leaders but the logic of violence. The mass violence that breaks out in a violent social revolution has to be brought under control once it has achieved its destructive purpose. In this process, out of the unorganised violence there emerges an instrument of organised violence—a Red Army, a People's Liberation Army. Whoever comes to control that instrument, power rests in their hands and not in the hands of the people.... A violent revolution is generally considered to be swift and sure. It is neither. It takes a long time, sometimes centuries, for a violent revolution to succeed, and when it does, the aims of the revolution are thrust into the distant future to be achieved no one knows when.... Therefore, I reject the violent way."¹⁷⁵

On and off he returned to the theme. He stressed the point again in an essay published in December 1970: "No, violence has not proved to be the saviour that the oppressed and exploited are led to believe it is. To alter slightly Tolstoy's famous remark, the revolutionaries have done everything for the people but get off their backs."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴Jayaprakash Narayan; *Three Basic Problems of Free India* (Dadabhai Naoroji Memorial Prize Fund Lectures), Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp 43-45.

¹⁷⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "Paths to Social Revolution", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*; p 223.

¹⁷⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "Face to Face", *Towards Total Revolution*; Vol 1; *op cit*, p 242.

But Jayaprakash applied an entirely different standard when a crisis developed in the eastern wing of Pakistan. He pleaded with the Indian government to accord recognition to the Bangladesh government in exile. He travelled extensively abroad soliciting support for the freedom struggle established personal contact with most of its front rank leaders and gave them every possible help, moral and otherwise.

How deeply Bangladesh affairs stirred him could be gauged from what he told a newsman in Calcutta in April 1971. Asked about his "views on the prospects of effective resistance," Jayaprakash said: "Considering there is such a tremendous spirit behind the movement in Bangladesh—an almost suicidal spirit—which is enabling the freedom fighters to face one of the best equipped armies in Asia...the situation seems ripe for effective resistance. The monsoon is coming. This is propitious, too."

Replying to another question—"Where do you think the base for resisters should be set up? — he observed: "I can't commit myself on this issue. But I was pleasantly surprised to see that a metropolitan editor of a newspaper had said that India might play the role that Tunisia and Morocco had played in the Algerian liberation movement."¹⁷⁷

And, others apart, there is Koirala to vouch for the fact that Jayaprakash took a keen interest in every aspect of the struggle, not excluding the freedom fighter's need for money or weapons. In a taped interview with the present writer in September 1981, Koirala said: "We had collected arms for use in Nepal. When Pakistan cracked down on the people of Bangladesh [then East Pakistan] some of their young leaders came to me for help. Jayaprakash also told me that if I had arms to spare I should give them as a gift to them, for they were in great need of arms. It was in May 1971 that I had a truckload of arms, worth about seven or eight lakhs rupees, sent to Bangladesh, contiguous to Purnea district in Bihar. As those young men did not know how to handle arms, I had to send a

¹⁷⁷*Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta 30 April 1971, p 12.

few instructors also."¹⁷⁸

Some four years later he chose to speak in an entirely different key. Dilating on what the people should do if he were arrested in connection with the Bihar movement, Jayaprakash observed in February 1975: "In fairness to me, to yourself and the movement that is going on in Bihar and is in the offing elsewhere, I ask you to bear in mind that you must always act peacefully, whatever you may do I wish to repeat my appeal to my countrymen that they must act peacefully in all circumstances."

That said, Jayaprakash made a startling statement, categorically deprecating the use of violence in the August 1942 movement, which he had once lauded most impassionedly. In point of fact he repudiated his own past: "When Gandhiji was arrested on 9 August, 1942, violence erupted all over the country. It harmed the movement. Had there been no violence, the August movement would not have subsided after a short while as it did."¹⁷⁹

A brief reference to another incident, though of a different nature. Jayaprakash is alternately praised and condemned for his new historical "call," made at the height of the Bihar movement in 1974, "to the army and the police not to obey orders which went against their consciences." More significant, "addressing an open session of a student convention at Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, on March 31, 1975, he said he would have no hesitation in summoning the army and the police to revolt at the right time."¹⁸⁰ This brought a hornets' nest about his ears. Some accused him of being a hypocrite, others likened him to a chameleon. Yet others said that Jayaprakash, "unlike Gandhi, whom he claims to follow closely, has not unreservedly accepted nonviolence as a morally superior weapon to violence in sociopolitical action. His choice between these two opposing instruments is one

¹⁷⁸Bhola Chatterji, "JP. Deterioration of Ideal", *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 13 October 1981.

¹⁷⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "If I am arrested", *Everyman's*; 16 February 1975, p 10.

¹⁸⁰Drieberg and Jag Mohan, *op cit*, pp 53, 55.

of expediency. He follows the path of peace if he thinks this serves his aim. But he will turn to violence if peaceful methods do not take him to his objective."¹⁸¹

Is there any truth in this? Was Jayaprakash guilty of indulging in what might be double standards and double talk? Was there really an area of darkness between the ideals he preached and some of his sociopolitical actions? In harsher words, was expediency his guiding principle in politics? A one-word answer, uncritical, to be sure, would be no.

But this would neither carry conviction nor bridge the yawning fissure which appeared at times between his profession and practice that seemed to lack an ethical frame of reference. Particularly when Jayaprakash himself is on record with the admission, implied though, that his theoretical formations did not always have a bearing on his approach to some major questions I have touched on in the preceding pages.

This issue had often been discussed and debated by his adversaries as well as friends, certainly not the least important among whom was U Ba Swe. The question he had raised in 1950 was answered by Jayaprakash in the course of a taped interview, I had with him nearly 23 years later. Though somewhat lengthy, the interview may be reproduced in full, for it sums up cogently his attitude to this vexed issue.

On 29 December 1973, I met Jayaprakash at the Calcutta residence of his brother-in-law, Shibnath Prasad, and asked him a number of questions, the most important of which, for my purpose here, was: "JP, I should like to request you to join me for a walk down Memory Lane. It is all about Nepal and the 1950-51 armed revolution there. You would recall that way back in 1950 you gave me a letter of introduction to U Ba Swe, then chairman of the Socialist Party of Burma and the country's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister.

"With your letter I went to Burma and eventually succeeded in getting a plane-load of arms for the Nepali

¹⁸¹*Ibid*; p 53.

Congress. The question the Burmese socialist leaders, particularly U Ba Swe, asked me repeatedly was how a man like Jayaprakash Narayan, who seemed to have unreservedly committed himself to nonviolence and whose faith in Gandhism was unquestionable, could support armed struggle in another country, that is, Nepal. What do you have to say to that, I mean, how do you explain it?"

Replying to my question, Jayaprakash said: "Well, Bholā, I think this is a very simple matter. U Ba Swe, I think, has misunderstood Gandhi. As the leader of the Indian freedom movement he emphasised eschewing violence and adherence to a programme of nonviolence. He at the same time supported all freedom movements in the world irrespective of the methods that they used, whether they were armed or unarmed.

"India perhaps is the only country in history where there has been a freedom movement without arms, though there were small sections of young people and others who did believe in armed revolution. But they also had to join Gandhi because Gandhi was able to rouse the masses in a manner in which none had succeeded. As far as other countries were concerned, Gandhi knew very well that if nonviolence was not practicable for them they would follow any method, and, therefore, he supported national movements irrespective of violence or non-violence. My attitude is the same and was the same in the case of Nepal. I must say that I had discussed the question of violence versus nonviolence with B P [Koirala]. What he told me then and he tells me now is that the question of a nonviolent struggle in Nepal was just not possible. I had to accept the situation as it was.

"Perhaps where I went beyond Gandhi, a step which Gandhi might not have approved of, I am sure he would not have approved of, was in trying to get arms for the Nepali Congress to wage its armed struggle against the rānas, the despotic rule of the rānas. I think I did this because I felt that if it was not possible for the Nepali Congress, that is, the Nepali nationalists, to follow non-violence it would be wrong of me not to help them. Because I

believe in freedom, in democracy and I wanted the Nepalese people to be free of the despotic rana regime.

"It was in the interest of the democratic movement in Nepal, the freedom movement in Nepal, that I assisted as far as I could the Nepali Congress and sent you with a letter to U Ba Swe. And he was kind enough to give the Nepali Congress a planeload of arms. This is my justification, I think it is very simple. It may be considered by doctrinaire Gandhians as not being very consistent with nonviolence, but I personally have no difficulty in squaring whatever I did with my nonviolence. My conception of nonviolence is not that people should submit to any kind of injustice and oppression without resisting. If they cannot resist nonviolently, you remember that Gandhiji had said many times, time and again he said, if you cannot fight injustice, if you cannot fight oppression nonviolently, all right, you fight it violently. He was not against it at all. Gandhiji himself perhaps would not have lent his support in any manner, but I thought I was being consistent with my own view of nonviolence."¹⁸²

It may be instructive to read along with this Jayaprakash's statement, in 1951, that "the Socialist Party believes that given the framework of democratic political functions, such as adult franchise and assurance of fundamental democratic freedoms, it would be both possible and desirable to use the democratic or peaceful method for the establishment of a socialist government and eventually the creation of a socialist society."¹⁸³

His emphasis on nonviolence was never in terms of categorical imperatives. As he saw it, the method of political action was necessarily influenced by the socio-political climate which prevailed at a given point of time. The whole idea was that tyranny and oppression, denial of basic human rights and liberties, must be resisted, no matter what the cost or what tools of political action might have to be used. His reasoning was essentially based on the much-discussed Gandhian percept that is now history.

¹⁸²Bhola Chatterji, "Perhaps I went beyond Gandhi," *Sunday*, Vol 5, Issue 6, 24 April 1977, pp 18-19.

¹⁸³Jayaprakash Narayan, *Political Trends*, *op cit*, p 6.

"Where there is a choice only between cowardice and violence," as Gandhi put it, "I would advise violence."¹⁸⁴

As for his exhorting the armed forces and the police not to allow themselves to be used as mere automatons, let us listen to what an honourable and much-decorated soldier has to say about it. Referring to Jayaprakash's advice to the nation's defence forces not to remain unresponsive to the voice of conscience, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, General J N. Chaudhuri, said: "This brings me to the recent controversy on keeping the army apolitical. While this was a necessary doctrine for the British Imperial Army of India, recent events have shown that it is not necessary to keep the army personnel isolated and insulated from exercising their moral and human judgement in a given situation. Perhaps this is what JP had in mind when he asked the army not to surrender their moral criteria in a potentially immoral situation. Politics unfortunately having degenerated to the level of what it was during the dark months of emergency, it is by no means certain that one would be on safe ground in asking the army to function in a robot-like imperial fashion."¹⁸⁵

With Jayaprakash at the helm, the Socialist Party entered the hustings for independent India's first general election in 1952 in an unenviable shape. Ideological confusion, pronounced difference of opinion between Jayaprakash and Lohia on most vital issues, and lack of a clear-headed policy towards Congress robbed the party of much of its vitality. What further numbed it were the electoral arrangements, mostly expedient, which it had made with certain so-called left groups, other than the communists, in some states. Particularly unwelcome was the party's electoral understanding with the Jharkhand Party (a regional outfit in Bihar) and the Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF) of B R Ambedkar, both unabashedly sectarian.

Understandably, opinions sharply differed with regard

¹⁸⁴*Young India*, 11 August 1920.

¹⁸⁵*General J.N. Chaudhuri : An Autobiography*, as narrated to B K Narayan, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978, pp 187-88.

to the policy of electoral adjustment, especially with the Jharkhand Party and the Scheduled Caste Federation. The fact that this was done in violation of the party's declared policy to the two groups only caused bad blood among socialists, apart from eroding its credibility. Although "Ashok Mehta...and Jayaprakash Narayan put forward some extremely dubious arguments in order to justify the electoral alliance with the SCF, it cut no ice. Still worse harm was done when socialists were asked to advise the people to vote for Congress in those constituencies where the party would not put up any candidate, that is, it would be a straight fight between Congress and the Communist Party." ¹⁸⁶

From its inception till the first general election the stream of Indian socialism, in spite of wide differences regarding ideas, methods and objectives, had managed to flow continuously without forcing passages for tributaries. But the most critical period in the life of the party commenced with its trouncing at the polls. The failure was interpreted as confirmation of the basic contradictions in the party's conception of socialism. The accusation was that it had operated as a halfway house, a corrective of sorts for both Congress and the Communist Party, that it had failed in its assessment of Congress, taken too many things for granted and had neglected to formulate clearly its own philosophy.

The severe drubbing at the polls left the party in a state of trauma. Its infantile venture to synthesise a bit of the good from all extant political philosophies—Gandhism, the West European variety of democratic socialism, Marxism and all—into an integrated system was adjudged to have misfired, and miserably too. The responsibility for this was laid at Jayaprakash's door. In any case that is how he also looked at it. For he could manage the show as he desired almost without resistance. Lohia differed with him on many issues but made no effort to question his leadership.

With Lohia in the chair, the party met at a special

¹⁸⁶Singh, *op cit*, p 164.

convention at Pachmarhi in May 1952 to take stock of the situation. Crestfallen socialists assembled in strength to seek a way to get over the trauma in which the first general election had left the party. Lohia forced the party to go through a hectic process of self-criticism and he offered it an alternative said to contain the basic ingredients to give the party what it ought have acquired long before—socialism with an Indian face.

The perspective was there before Lohia: socialism in India had far too many gaps and patchworks in its ideological premises and it lacked a comprehension of the crisis in the Indian polity. He lashed out at Asoka Mehta and Jayaprakash, neither of whom joined issue with him at that point. But the leaders were frightened out of their wits and sought to gather support from other quarters. If Lohia's crusade was against this kind of politicking, it was for giving socialism an Indian identity with a stable doctrinal framework without insulating it completely from the mainstream of international socialist movement.

At Pachmarhi Lohia easily emerged as man of the morrow as well as today's crusader against everything that mocked the Indian people with false hopes. Reminding the delegates that "what we do at this convention will decide, for some years at least, whether India divides into two sets of dreary and screeching chorus boys of capitalism and of communism or adventures into creating a new civilisation away from both," he observed that "the career of socialism is impeded most by its inability hitherto to secure a doctrinal foundation."

At the same time it would be utterly fatuous to forget that "no living doctrine is ever fully founded as closed. That day will be dimmal when socialists cease to complain of their confusion. But there must be "adequate doctrinal foundation of consistent logic that gives socialism an autonomous direction in thought and action and save it from confusions that disperse and scatter." He stressed the point that "socialism must irrevocably reject all doctrines of restricted capitalism and mixed economy." As for communism, Lohia stated that it "alters alone

the capitalist relations of production and seeks to reproduce its forces; socialism must alter them both." Did he suggest that the machine should be rejected? No, not at all. His argument was for "a rejection of the situation in which the heavy machine and its counterpart, the leviathan state, predominate. Nothing but failure lies at the end of a long trail of savagery, should ever the underdeveloped world decide to form itself in the image of the developed, an ambition common to capitalism and communism."

Lohia also stressed that, unlike European socialism, which for historical reasons had been "gradual, constitutional and distributive, socialism henceforth and in the rest of the world must be drastic, unconstitutional when necessary, and lay the accent on production." What about the methodology to be pursued? The answer was that since "the process of persuasion and lawmaking are not always available timely." Socialists must add to them "the method of class struggle, particularly in the underdeveloped areas." This however must not be equated with the conventional concept of class struggle.

Forms of struggle and organisation would have to pass the "test of immediacy." More concretely, "each act of struggle should contain its own justification...it must not justify...a present sacrifice of national freedom by a remote one world, an immediate murder by a future health." It must also be borne in mind that "a mark of degradation of man is the extent to which he makes and listens to demagogue appeals of force. Such appeals to violence are a denial of reason... . Socialism must ever denounce the advocacy and organisation of violence and it must strive to achieve such basis of peaceful struggles as will lead to increased individual initiative and responsibility and not to concentration of power."

To make the Socialist Party an effective tool of change, socialism "should cease to live on borrowed breath." It would not get the socialists anywhere if they continued to borrow "from communism its economic aims and from capitalism or the liberal age its noneconomic and

general aims." It was necessary to "give a firm foundation to the theory of socialism" and adhere to the principle of "the spade, the vote and the prison" constructive work, election and resistance to injustice respectively.

He emphasised that socialists must set their face against all talk of coalition with Congress or a united front with communists. For, "much of this yearning for coalition or united fronts is the refusal to face reality and to struggle the hard way." Regarding Vinoba Bhave's *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement, which had already attracted the party's most celebrated mass leader, Jayaprakash, Lohia observed that it "has hitherto been an inadequate doctrine of love. Only when love and anger, love for all and anger against injustice, find a combined expression through revolution will humanity be able to make the next onward move."¹⁸⁷ Lohia invited the socialists to see things in their right perspective, to refuse to discover any virtue in expedience when principled politics was at stake. He asked them to disabuse themselves of yesterday's wrong ideas and not to attempt to short-circuit what was destined to be a long arduous journey to socialism.

The Pachmarhi convention was a turning point in the Indian socialist movement. Lohia emerged as the theoretician of the party. A democratic socialist by conviction and not because of circumstances, he regarded socialism as a way of life. It had to be lived at every level and always, and not restricted to the ceremonial and the demonstrative. The gloom that the general fiasco had cast over the convention apparently dispersed, and the delegates left for home reasonably assured that the party would be put back on the rails.

Lohia was the socialist movement's nonconformist ideologue. He was a nonconformist when society needed non-conformism most but had contempt for it. To be a non-

¹⁸⁷*Presidential Address of Dr Rammanohar Lohia to the Special Convention of the Socialist Party, Pachmarhi (Madhya Pradesh), 23 May 1952, Western Printers & Publishers; Bombay, 1952, pp, 1-2, 7, 9-12, 22, 27, 39, 41.*

conformist in a society bound by tradition and authority, society that is intolerant of anything which disturbs its grooved attitude to life, particularly when nonconformism means a one-way ticket to damnation, calls for rare courage and integrity. These Lohia had in abundance.

That Lohia was also an iconoclast is indisputable. But his iconoclasm was not for the mere pleasure of being in the news. To those who questioned the sagacity of his approach to men and events Lohia's argument was that "nothing ever got done without enraging some people. The great changes of society are always accomplished after some sections of opinion, sometimes large, are thoroughly angered." Gandhi did no less. As Lohia put it, "Gandhi knew how to risk his popularity. He had a calf, the child of the sacred cow, injected to death in certain situation; he had a monkey shot; he took Harijans into temples; he refused to attend weddings unless they were intercaste; he sanctioned divorce; he had the large sum of Rs. 55 crores and more given to Pakistan at a time when Hindus held that treasonable; he acted and not only spoke against property; in brief, he hardly ever missed doing anything that brought new life to the nation even if it brought calumny and danger to him."¹⁸⁸

Whatever that is, the socialists, not excluding Lohia's critics, apparently hailed his Pachmarhi thesis as an open sesame that would enable the party of socialism to rise, phoenixlike, from the ashes, revitalised and recharged for the onward journey to success.

The beginning looked promising. Lohia seemed to have provided a key to transforming a past-regarding society into a future-regarding society. And the socialists made a dash to grab it. But that was true only in parts.

The unfolding future had indeed a different story to tell. Not many appeared to have forgotten anything that stood between them and Lohia. The reaction to his virtual ideological conquest of the party was not very late

¹⁸⁸Rammanohar Lohia, "Towards the Destruction of Castes and Classes," *The Caste System*, Navahind, Hyderabad, 1964, p 83.

to surface. There were few reasons why his thesis should commend itself to Jayaprakash. Indeed, it did not, and he used the convention platform to share his reservations with the assembled delegates.

He told them more than anybody else he should be held responsible for the party's election debacle. This would not be unnatural because the socialists had in the past few years entrusted him with running the party. He was not worried overmuch about the defeat itself. What really worried him was the "feeling among the party ranks that our policies were responsible for our electoral defeat." More particularly, the charge that the situation would have been entirely different if, as Jayaprakash placed it, "we had not deviated from our revolutionary path and had launched nationwide struggles."

Jayaprakash stoutly denied this. He maintained that the party had not deserted the path of struggle as and when the occasion arose, although "the main and primary task" was to attend to the pressing work of building up "a nationwide organisation." As for struggles, Jayaprakash referred to the initiative Lohia had taken to organise a good many struggles courting "arrest a number of times."¹⁸⁹ But that did not clinch the issue. A large number of party men thought Jayaprakash should have, in keeping with the party's declared policy, led it through struggles but had failed to do so. The point was well rubbed in.

This severely hurt Jayaprakash's pride. He had no reason to be pleased with what had been suggested, particularly considering Lohia's explicit views, as placed before the convention, that "a doctrine and a party is judged not alone by what it professes but also by the extent to which it can struggle and suffer. The people are drawn to a faith that brings out the capacity to bear witness and to suffer. ... The Socialist Party has in the recent past suffered generally from a miscalculation. Eager to

¹⁸⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Elections and the Socialist Party;" *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 169-170:

organise the popular verdict in favour of socialism, it thought that a diffusion of activity into struggles would reduce its capacity to win votes. Such a mechanical conception of organisation is wrong and socialism should never again repeat the error. It has now been established that areas where socialists undertook resistance to injustice have generally returned them to the legislatures, no matter how long they stayed in prison or how much their organisation was apparently broken up."¹⁹⁰

Conceivably, Jayaprakash had a feeling as if the quality of his leadership was being assessed vis-a-vis Lohia. Otherwise, it is not easy to explain what prevailed upon him to explain away, almost aggrievedly, his conduct: "Some feel that I should have personally led a struggle. I could have, but you had burdened me with other responsibilities and tasks. The organisational responsibility was on me. There were the nationwide tours and the fund collections. I could not do everything at the same time." And he then made an effort to counter Lohia's argument that organisation was essentially "a by product of action."

Jayaprakash said that it would have been quite another matter if the party had opted for "a different policy and strategy." If so, it could have "instead of undertaking extensive organisation work" elected to "concentrate" its activities in "selected areas and could have launched well-conducted local struggles. But such a policy of intensive organisational and struggle activities would not have given us the necessary national status and face." Emphasis on struggle would have necessarily acted as a check on the party's growth as Jayaprakash saw it. Since the party's options were limited to "intensive and extensive work.... I think the choice made of extensive work was correct."¹⁹¹

Logic was not Jayaprakash's forte in his defence of the party platform. His desire not to be identified with Lohia's theoretical postulates, his insistence on upholding his

¹⁹⁰Presidential Address of Dr Rammanohar Lohia, *op cit*; p 25.

¹⁹¹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Elections and the Socialist Party," *op cit*; p 171.

political line, which the party had followed all along, and his subsequent musings indicate that he was far from reconciled to Lohia's suggested changes in the direction and orientation of the party. The observation he made in referring to Lohia's Pachmarhi formulations would confirm not only this but also the point that he was, ideologically speaking, in a state of confusion and did not know what he wanted.

As he put it, "Lohia has placed before the party an integrated doctrine. ... Let me deal here with the question whether we are or are not Marxists or whether Lohia's doctrine is consistent with Marxism. Personally, I feel we should not cut ourselves off from the Marxian tradition...."

Then he came to the most bewildering aspect of his understanding of both Marx and Lohia. With no hesitation he said he approached "Lohia's address as a Marxist" and yet he had "no difficulty in accepting what he has said." That was not the end of it all. Unmindful of all that had happened since the party's withdrawal from Congress and his own ideological experiments, he asserted that the "Socialist Party is the only Marxist party in India. We have not only correctly understood Marxism but have also applied it correctly." And rhetoric got the better of his reason when he suggested that "as Marx had to achieve a synthesis so have the Indian socialists. Why should we not combine the Marxian thought with the thought and practice of Mahatma Gandhi and achieve a synthesis of our own?"¹⁹²

The suggestion that the Pachmarhi thesis did not on the whole contradict the basic premises of his theoretical concept was an amazing exercise. Apart from it being the exact opposite of what Lohia's thesis had wanted to convey, this left Jayaprakash open to the accusation of opting for a tactical posture in his ideological conflict with Lohia. His failure in which eventually turned out to be one of the

¹⁹²Jayaprakash Narayan, "New Doctrine", *Towards Total Revolution*; Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 216-20; 223.

major reasons for his withdrawal from the socialist movement. It may be noted that his emphasis on identifying the party with Marxism became a stale joke only a couple of months later, when he formally recorded his total rejection of Marxism.

From Jayaprakash's point of view internal developments in the party were far from satisfactory. The distance between him and Lohia increased, and there was an evident attempt to rationalise personal animosity in ideological terms. It appeared that Jayaprakash was all set to strike out on a new path as he realised that he could not possibly make the party see things through his prism. Scarcely a few weeks had passed after the Pachmarhi convention when he decided to go on a 21-day fast in June 1952. The fast was undertaken, in his words, as "a self-purificatory sacrifice."

Explaining its relevance, he said that socialism had as a matter of course "relied on institutional changes for curing the evils of modern society." But he did not think that "institutional changes" alone could do the job unless "individual man, the root of society," was "also cured." That explained "why we have been laying more and more emphasis on values and the right means.... If we have to serve socialism and create a new society and a new man (which is more important), we must make ourselves worthy instruments." And therefore the fast, which "has been to me a cleansing experience."¹⁹³

However charitable a view might be taken of this exercise, it did not help the disconcerted party to rally its spirits. The discomposure was further aggravated when Jayaprakash declared after the fast that his "final break with Marxism...had come during the three weeks' fast."¹⁹⁴ This was an amazing statement from a man who had only a few weeks earlier fixed the tag of Marxism to Lohia's

¹⁹³Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Fast", *ibid*; pp 149-50.

¹⁹⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*; *op cit*, p 27.

evidently non-Marxian thesis at Pachmarhi. In an essay "Incentive to Goodness," written after the fast he sought to convey the message that good men, irrespective of their party affiliations, should get together to rebuild society. He also started questioning the relevance of the party system itself. Although the socialists had by now come to associate inconsistency with Jayaprakash's political thinking, they found this particular manifestation of it much too demanding.

There was no dearth of men, within and outside the party, who gave the fast a different interpretation. It was said that Jayaprakash had undertaken it in order to pressure the government to fulfil its supposed commitment to pay postal workers their wages for the period they were on strike in 1946.¹⁹⁵ While others even suggested that Jayaprakash was preparing for his withdrawal from the party, the fast being an attempt to recreate a bit of the atmosphere that obtained whenever Gandhi fasted, albeit in another context and for altogether different reasons.

Hopes went away. The Pachmarhi convention failed to inspire the party to pull itself together for a "more purposeful striving after the ideal of socialism." Rather the post-Pachmarhi situation spurred it to steer a relatively safe course. It opted for enlarging its bulk by what was sought to be described as consolidation of the democratic opposition forces in the country. In concrete terms, the net result was the merger of the Socialist Party and the

¹⁹⁵Jayaprakash was president of the All India Postmen and Lower Grade Staff Union at that time. Negotiations with the government for payment of strike wages having failed, the workers decided to strike again in 1948. Further talks between Jayaprakash and Union Communications Minister Rafi Ahmed Kidwai were said to have extracted a promise that strike period wages would be paid. Non-fulfilment of this prompted Jayaprakash to declare that he would fast until this was done. Once again it was said to have been assured that the government would respect its commitment. As this was also not fulfilled, Jayaprakash felt that he should; in view of his assurance to the postal workers, atone for this lapse by fasting.

Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP)¹⁹⁶ to form, not much long after Jayaprakash's "self-purification" fast, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) in 1952. Subsequently, a section of the Forward Bloc, which styled itself Subhasist, merged with this formation.

The merger move was essentially made with an eye to the survival of the party, its physical expansion, particularly in view of the Communist Party's relatively sizable presence in Parliament. But it did not seem to have occurred to the party's policymaking elite, Jayaprakash in particular, that bringing together two lame men would not enable them to avoid walking on crutches. That the merger of the two parties was an essay in crude pragmatism would be evident if we recall what Kripalani and Jayaprakash observed when the deed was done.

While explaining the rationale of the merger at the joint meeting of the representatives of KMPP and the Socialist Party held in Bombay on 26 and 27 September 1952, Kripalani said: "The present merger is...based upon no dogma, rigid creed or ism. It is of a practical and pragmatic nature. Nevertheless, it is not opportunist because it is built on the foundations of certain basic principles. I hope no rigid theory or fanatic creed will be built upon it, involving us in hair-splitting theoretical discussions and thesis and counter-theses."¹⁹⁷

Jayaprakash sought to strengthen Kripalani's argument, which was nothing if not a piece of sophistry. With felicity he reconciled his unctuous concern about principles, values and ideology with Kripalani's fallacious contention and recorded this observation: "It was good that ideological issues were kept out when we agreed to merger. This tidied over a number of difficulties. There have been no doubt misunderstandings and other difficulties, but, I am sure, mutual trust, faith and forbearance will help us to

¹⁹⁶This was an outfit of former Congressmen who had, under J B Kripalani's leadership, left Congress immediately before the 1952 general election.

¹⁹⁷*The merger. How and Why*, Praja Socialist, Party Bombay 1952, p 22.

get over these difficulties and this party will become the builder of a new India." What he added was yet more disturbing: "Many of us in the Socialist Party owe allegiance to Marxism [Jayaprakash had "finally" abandoned Marxism a couple of months earlier, following his 21-day fast in June-July 1952] and yet we have always tried to understand and appreciate others' point of view."¹⁹⁸

How sharply this contrasts with what Jayaprakash had said earlier about KMPP. According to him, "the recent splits in Congress and the formation of the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party are of considerable political significance But the repeated statements of the KMPP leaders that they have no particular ideology, nor any difference with Congress policy and programme has robbed this significant political development of much positive value."¹⁹⁹ All that could be said about the SP-KMPP merger is that it was an act of serving immediate interest at the cost of the greater interest of the socialist movement. Much as it is easy to have hindsight, the fact remains that the formation of PSP, largely on KMPP terms, was an exercise in expediency that had an unsavoury effect on the socialist movement.

So far as the Socialist Party was concerned, Jayaprakash was the moving spirit behind the merger. It would be clear from what he said in an article *Janata* carried in its 23 November 1952 issue: "Ever since the Pachmarhi conference I had been pleading for steps leading towards the merger of the two parties. At the meeting of the general council of the Socialist Party I made it abundantly clear that any vacillations in moving towards a merger at this stage would make ourselves the laughing stock of history."²⁰⁰ The merger did not have an ideological basis. Nor was any attempt made to explain it in terms that the lone socialist working among the deprived and

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p 25.

¹⁹⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, *Political Trends*, op cit, p 9.

²⁰⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "Answer to Some Vital Questions." *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, op cit; p 174.

the castaway in the back blocks could comprehend. The need of the hour was to stay the course and not opt for what was patently aimed at saving the party from disintegration through temporising and compromises.

It was not apparently realised that the party would have to do some hard thinking before the political line was re-fashioned on the heels of the Pachmarhi convention. Jayaprakash had other ideas, and this was subsequently proved to the hilt. Otherwise, it should not have been difficult for him to appreciate that in order to be effective as an organised political force, to be able to shape itself as a democratic socialist alternative to the party in power, the party of socialism must come of age.

Arguably, it would have been in the vastly changed context a trifle irrelevant if the emphasis were to be on the conventional concept of democratic socialism. As other things change with time, so do the ideological formulations that might have been relevant in the past. It was necessary for socialist politics to change its basic doctrinal formulations, and rid itself of some of its ideological plumage which at another time might have lent it a certain grace. But the political engineering that Jayaprakash initiated soon after the party's near rout in the 1952 general election, particularly after the Pachmarhi convention, could not possibly respond to this challenge.

The Socialist Party had, its many shortcomings notwithstanding, acquired the hard way a splendid heritage of struggle, suffering and sacrifice. Between the attainment of freedom and the first general election it had involved itself deeply in the liberation struggles in Goa, Hyderabad and Nepal, apart from pioneering innumerable peasant and worker struggles all over the country which obliged a large number of socialists, including Lohia, to suffer detention. This was squandered for the dubious gains that merger seemed to proffer.

The socialists did not have to wait long to realise this. Much before the new party could get off the ground schism and conflict, determined mostly by fads and fancies of certain personalities, rent it in divergent groups,

each intent on pulling it in its own direction. As if to put the lid on, Jayaprakash sprang a surprise that few socialists had expected, his sudden decision to dissociate himself from trade unionism.

Almost from the inception of CSP Jayaprakash had been very closely associated with the working class movement in India. He was in fact the party's spokesman in matters relating to labour organisations, himself the chief executive of a number of regional and national trade unions. It was therefore quite natural that his withdrawal from the movement, as also its timing, would cause a flutter. To explain his action he said: "My decision to withdraw from [the] trade union movement and settle for work in a village is not at all motivated by any desire to withdraw from active political work. On the other hand, I have taken this decision with a view to making my political work more effective and productive."

Referring to rumours after he had expressed his desire to opt for rural work, he said he was aware that "some have circulated the whispering news that I am not very happy over the merger of KMPP and the Socialist Party, and eventually I have lost interest in active politics." But, he emphasised, "there cannot be anything further from the truth than this whispering campaign."²⁰¹ It may not be irrelevant to note that future events would suggest that either this was not a candid statement or his decision to withdraw from active politics, formally announced sometime later in 1954, was determined not so much by reason as by emotional and subjective factors.

Jayaprakash's political career seemed to have arrived at the crossroads. It would not be mere imagination if it is said that the man was ill at ease, even at loggerheads with himself, politically speaking. He was the most popular leader after Nehru and PSP was his progeny. Yet he could not steer the party along the course he wanted. A substantial part of PSP's socialist segment was with Lohia, while the so-called Gandhian segment, which comprised

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, pp 173-74.

former KMPP members, took its cue from Kripalani.

The other half of the picture was that Jayaprakash's brand of ideology, a medley of ingredients culled from diverse sources, could attract few adherents. The increasing shift in emphasis from party to movement, indifference to politics of struggle, the argument that society would not change unless man decided to change himself, that it was possible to change man if the right approach was made, which indeed was what the bhoodan leader Vinoba Bhave was engaged in, and that power alone was no answer to the problem of reconstructing society—these were some of the essential aspects of Jayaprakash's thinking at that moment. The word "moment" is deliberately used, for his universe of thought was undergoing a continuous succession of changes that had no nodal point other than a nebulous element called Gandhism.

In that state of mind Jayaprakash went to Rangoon in January 1953 to address the first Asian Socialist Conference as leader of the Indian delegation. The conference was the product primarily of Lohia's vision, initiative and efforts. As the Socialist Party's foreign policy formulator he had in conjunction with U Ba Swe²⁰² and U Kyaw Nyein, Burmese socialist leaders, and Soetan Sjahrir, the leader of the Indonesian Socialist Party, worked hard to give form to an amorphous idea.

The major consideration was that this would provide Asian socialists with a platform for voicing the ideas of the third camp in international politics, for encouraging the "creation of a new constructive force in international affairs."²⁰³ In view of this it was expected that Lohia would be the party's choice for leading the Indian dele-

²⁰²U Ba Swe was chairman of the Burma Socialist Party as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister of Burma. Although U Nu, nominee of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), of which the Burma Socialist Party was a constituent, was prime Minister; the Socialist Party set the tone and temper of the government.

²⁰³Rammanohar Lohia, "An Asian Policy", *Aspects of Socialist Policy*, *op cit*, p 21.

gation to the conference. This was not to be, and the task devolved upon Jayaprakash. Lohia, though present in Calcutta at that time, decided to keep away from the conference which he had done most to organise.

Most of what Jayaprakash said at the conference contradicted much of what the socialist movement stood for. He demolished many of the ideas, principles and beliefs for which socialists had ceaselessly fought for years and which collectively constituted the cardinal point of their faith. Lohia and many a socialist of his persuasion had reasons to feel that the party had been let down. Describing in detail his understanding of socialism, Jayaprakash said that Asian socialists would "never be able to establish socialism" if they put their faith in "the working class and ...the trade union movement" to the extent that European socialists did.

If Asian socialists were serious about their mission, then they would have to solve the problem of land so that they might be able to secure "the support of the peasantry" Jayaprakash said. This could not possibly be done without gratifying the peasants' "elemental urges." Shorn of verbiage, this boiled down to giving "them land by abolishing feudalism and redistributing the land holdings." And the most dependable way to do so would be to follow in the footsteps of "a great Indian, the foremost follower of Mahatma Gandhi, called Vinoba Bhave."

Bhave's "is an entirely new technique," Jayaprakash asserted. Bhave wanted landlordism to be abolished, that land must belong to the peasant. It is just that he would have this done "by the method of 'love'... I am aware that I am speaking from a socialist platform, but still I feel that this method is vital enough." He was confident that Bhave's bhoodan movement would work because, in the words of Jayaprakash, "we are all human beings, the landlord is also a human being, the capitalist is a human being; there is something in all of us to which this man is appealing and there is good response." Jayaprakash pleaded with the socialists for taking cognisance of "this new approach to economic problem," adding that he did

"not know if a similar technique can be evolved in other spheres for the redistribution of capitalist wealth, for the peaceful transformation of the capitalist system." In any case, he reminded his audience that "we are all going through the stage of experimentation and it is worthwhile that we experiment in this sphere of technique also."²⁰⁴

That was it. "Experiment" was the most potent word, the word which characterised almost every aspect of his politics till he quit the stage. His life indeed was a long series of experiments in thought and techniques which came in quick succession. This enchantment with and unreasoned faith in the bhodan movement went by the board a couple of decades later for another kind of experimentation. And his trust in the multiparty system of politics, which he pinpointed at the Asian Socialist Conference, just evaporated a few years later, only to be restored when his race had nearly run.

To be candid, even as the lines dilating upon the virtues of experiments in politics were being delivered Jayaprakash was in communication with Prime Minister Nehru for reasons political and not personal. The idea behind this was to take the newly merged party through yet another bout of experiment with an entirely different variety of political engineering. Notwithstanding the fondly believed promise of bhodan, which was supposed to raise man to a higher system of culture and values, he got himself engrossed in the intricacies of power politics, of devising ways of sharing power with Congress that he had already identified as the source of all evil in the country. And he started a dialogue with Nehru, about whom he had this to say some time ago.

In an unpublished article, subsequently included in *Towards Total Revolution* published in 1978, he branded Nehru a double-talker who was in the habit of practising the exact opposite of what he professed. For instance, in Jayaprakash's words, Nehru "believes in socialism, but

²⁰⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, *Ideological Problems of Socialism*, *op cit.*, pp 12-17.

practises God knows what. Certainly not socialism." His contention was that Nehru was actuated by selfish motives, otherwise he could not have called "himself a socialist, and yet make fun of socialism." Nehru did it "because he wants to remain in power by pleasing everyone, because he is too timid to change anything...one was used to associate intellectual integrity with Nehru, but he seems to have developed into an accomplished, but unprincipled, time-server. ... The only merit of Nehru has been that he has carried on the traditions of the British administration, but there also has been considerable deterioration in the services. Corruption, slackness, inefficiency and delay have increased."²⁰⁵

Not long after this Jayaprakash met Nehru in response to an invitation. For an idea of the background to their talks reference might be made to their respective versions of them. According to Jayaprakash, he met Nehru to explore the possibilities of cooperation between Congress and PSP "both at government and popular levels." While Nehru, in his reply, on 17 March 1953, to Jayaprakash's letter, said, among other things, that his "own purpose in having talks with you, as well as with Kripalaniji and Narendra Deva, was to bring about as large a measure of cooperation in our activities as possible...you will remember that I have been trying to meet you for many months past. This was no new urge due to any new occurrence.

"Long before you undertook your fast, I wrote to you and suggested that you might see me. But this could not be arranged, because of your fast and subsequent convalescence... It was obviously due to a feeling that we have big things to do in this country and we should approach them with our joint effort.... I did not think of any precise method of doing so. It was rather the general approach that mattered. I had not thought of what is called merger of parties. I felt that if there was a mutual realisation of the necessity of cooperation, other things would flow

²⁰⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "Nehru's Socialism", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, pp 186-189.

from it."²⁰⁶

At Nehru's initiative Jayaprakash met him in Delhi, once in February and twice in March 1953, to discuss the feasibility of PSP's sharing power, on the basis of a 14-point programme it had drawn up, with Congress. Nehru also met Narendra Deva and Kripalani, then chairman of PSP. Narendra Deva however refused to have anything to do with it and Kripalani did not think the proposition workable. And Lohia, who was not invited to meet Nehru for obvious reasons, made it clear that he opposed it through and through.

The talks for cooperation did not go far. Nehru and Jayaprakash approached the matter from two different directions. While Jayaprakash harped on programme and other formalities, Nehru indicated his preference for an informal approach to the issue. He wanted the socialists to do good for the country, and the only way they could do so was to fall into line with the government in his opinion. The exercise not only proved futile but also added to the already prevalent climate of scepticism and conflict in the party. Questions of ideological clarity, of attitude towards Congress, of redefinition of democratic socialism were being asked and doubts raised.

An impression seemed to have gained ground that PSP had set its sights on being a corrective to Congress. This was apparently corroborated by the then party general secretary Asoka Mehta's postulate that "the political compulsions of a backward economy" like India's should make it "possible to conceive of democratic parties drawing closer together, in the event of programmatic understanding, to carry jointly the country over the early period of economic development. ... In that event the areas of agreement will extend wide enough to enable a coalition government to be formed."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶Nehru-Jayaprakash Talks, A Praja Socialist Publication, Bombay, April 1953, p 5, 18, 19.

²⁰⁷Asoka Mehta, "Politics of Planned Economy", *Janata*, Vol VIII No 27, 2 August 1953, p 45, 49.

The issue arising out of Jayaprakash's talks with Nehru was sought to be resolved at an enlarged meeting at Betul in June 1953, of the party National Executive, state executive committees and a few prominent members. Jayaprakash came in for bitter criticism. Lohia made a concerted attack on the advocates of PSP-Congress cooperation, Jayaprakash in particular. As Lohia put it, "arising out of the talks of cooperation, a political formula has been placed before us which would without doubt blunt the party, the formula that because of their common adherence to nationalism, secularism and democracy the Praja Socialist Party and the Congress Party are sister parties as distinct from other parties in the land. If such common features are to be detected from time to time, what would prevent some people from detecting common features with the Communist Party such as nationalisation of industries or redistribution of land?"

"There is also this peculiar argument about democracy. This democracy which is supposed to establish a sisterly relationship between the Praja Socialist Party and the Congress Party, because the two are distinct and rivals for people's favour, is now being utilised to undermine this distinctness so as to achieve cooperation between them and to make them cease to be democratic rivals for people's favour. Democracy is being made to eat itself and socialism must reject formulas with such results."

Referring to Asoka Mehta's thesis on the political compulsions of a backward economy, which was supposed to provide an ideological cover for the Nehru-Jayaprakash talks, Lohia said: "The search for areas of agreement somewhat removes from sight the very much wider areas of disagreement. In a country where a hundred million people have to live on one meal a day, where near-famine stalks from state to state and full famine is threatened, where ejection, police repression, unemployment and other injustices continually prevail, the party will only stultify itself by shutting its eye to the sweeping areas of disagreement with the government party."

He scornfully dismissed Jayaprakash's suggestion that

good men must go together to remould society as well as his contention that the party system put a premium on the divisive forces in the country. The reference was obviously to Jayaprakash when Lohia observed: "It is being said that good people of all parties should come together, that the party system leads to wasting and frittering away of national energy and that a clash exists between party interest and national interest and that good people must therefore ever rise above party interest. All this has no meaning in politics unless it is meant to lead to a break-up of the existing parties and to the creation of a new one or to increase the strength of the party of one's choice.

"A no-party or an all-party effort inevitably leads to either some kind of a dictatorship or to the building up of a political party of one's choice. I can well understand the effort to remove the difficulties and weaknesses of a party but I cannot understand the decrying of the party system altogether. ... I do not think there exists a clash between party interest and national interest unless the party has lost its good content and is merely a ladder for power."²⁰⁸

Jayaprakash tried to defend his line vigorously. He spoke at length trying to rebut criticism of his talks with Nehru as also of the tenor of his recent observations, particularly on "moral and spiritual compulsions," "politics of goodwill" and irrelevance of the party system. He did not agree with his critics that his talks with Nehru had done harm to the party. But, said he, "If a proposal were again to be made I would tell Jawaharlalji that the time was not ripe for such an experiment."

That of course did not contradict his conviction that "given the necessary goodwill and agreement the joint effort I was visualising is desirable." Not only that, and here he defended Mehta's thesis, this "appears to be the only way to face and solve the tremendous problems of economic development and national integration."

As for "the general policy of cooperation", his attitude

²⁰⁸Rammanohar Lohia, "To the Betul Convention", *Will to Power* etc, *op cit*, p 136, 137, 141, 143.

was not to deny cooperation to anybody "provided...there is agreement on the purpose of cooperation and the work that is to be done." He failed to understand how "such an attitude blurs the features of the party." He stuck to his concept of "incentive to goodness," saying that within PSP and Congress "there are enough people who not only appreciate but agree with my approach. If such people ever get together, given the necessary goodwill, I have no doubt that they can achieve a great deal." We shall witness, some two decades later, his appeal to good people in Congress to support his politics of "total revolution" to liquidate Congress rule in the country.

What he further said would suggest that Jayaprakash had made up his mind to bring the entire issue to the boil. He seemed to have braced himself to call for a showdown if necessary. Reversing his role, he questioned the relevance of Lohia's Pachmarhi thesis which the old Socialist Party had accepted only a year before and which also obtained his support. As he put it, "the Pachmarhi thesis... whether or not it is automatically the policy of the Praja Socialist Party, I submit that my interpretation of the Pachmarhi thesis of equidistance [between PSP and other parties] does not happen to be the same as yours. The old Socialist Party had affirmed at Pachmarhi that it [would] not confuse its identity by coalitions or fronts with the Congress and Communist parties.... This is good as far as it goes.

"But consider a situation in which a political party has moved nearer to our position. What do we do then? Shall we be so dogmatic then as to move away from it as it moves nearer us in order to keep the distance constant?"

This was a rather fallacious starting-point for reasoning. There had been no change anywhere in the political scenario, nor had any party indicated the slightest desire to come closer to the PSP line. Jayaprakash had indeed no reason to raise such a hypothetical question. This apart, it was expected that he would, particularly since he was the party's chief spokesman, appreciate that any organised political party, not to speak of a socialist party, would lay

itself open to ridicule if it was required to change its tack as and when another political party might start making, possibly for tactical reasons, agreeable noise.

The concluding part of Jayaprakash's argument was the hackneyed theme that all good people must come together. Once again he reminded the party that "there are in Congress today a large number of good people." What he added to this clearly showed that Lohia's criticism had made him cross: "Much ridicule has been heaped on me for saying that good people should come together. Lohia argues that goodness alone is not enough for people to get together and work. I agree. When I say good people I am also concerned with their thoughts and approach to problems."

And then he put in a good word for Nehru which helped neither Nehru nor the party: "C G K Reddy [a supporter of Lohia] seems to imagine that Panditji's motive in making that offer of all-level cooperation was diabolical. It will be unfair to imagine so. The proposal he made was bold and unusual. Congress stands in no need of a coalition. Still, he wanted our cooperation in and out of government in the interest of nation-building." Jayaprakash did not appear to have realised that his approach to and defence of Nehru's sudden offer to explore avenues of cooperation between PSP and Congress was full of contradictions. How strange it is that he did not bother to raise the elementary question: Why should Nehru solicit PSP's cooperation, considering the wide ideological disagreement between the two parties and redundancy of outside support so far as Congress was concerned?

Jayaprakash refused to see the irrationality of his statement that his faith in the line he had followed so long remained unshaken. In fact, he said, "if I were not a member of the party I would have moved round the country, met leaders of Congress and other parties and tried to convert them to my point of view. My views have not changed." The worst was yet to come. Having waxed eloquent on the virtues of PSP-Congress cooperation he suddenly took an about-turn completely unmindful of the

likely consequences. Jayaprakash deliberately hit hard where it really hurt most of his listeners: "What I have said about the party system seems to have unduly alarmed some of you.... I have come to believe that the party system will not be conducive to national integration."

What made the party system still worse, according to him, was that it was "incapable of providing an adequate framework for the democratic requirements of the masses The Western system of party democracy has not proved to be a success." He condemned the party system and at the same time admitted that he had "no alternative to offer for the party system.... We will have to do serious thinking and find out an alternative."

From this he went over to championing the bhoodan movement, which he claimed was "an experiment in non-violent economic revolution." He believed that "the bhoodan movement of Vinoba has given a point and shape to people's hunger for land, to their yearning for equality." And in bhoodan he could see the "bold application" of nothing short of "Gandhiji's theory of trusteeship." He made bold to prophesy that "if bhoodan succeeds, not only will the problems of inequality in this possession of land be solved, but it will release and bring into play such moral and social forces that the while problem of economic inequality and exploitation will find its solution."²⁰⁹

If the rhetoric of Jayaprakash's lengthy speech at the Betul convention is ignored, it would be apparent that the core of his message consisted of three elements, each incompatible with the others: (a) all-inclusive PSP-Congress cooperation which alone could help the country to come into its own; (b) the party system was inimical to the growth and development of true democracy; and (c) the bhoodan movement promised all things to all men.

Jayaprakash seemed to have reached the end of his

²⁰⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Talks for Cooperation" (speech at the special convention of the Socialist Party, Betul, 14-18 June 1953), *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, pp 201-204, 209-212.

tether, particularly after he sensed the widespread feeling in the party that it would not go all the way with him in his multifaceted political experimentation, that he could not possibly get the better of Lohia in political polemics and that PSP in its extent form was not a tool he could use in whatever manner he wanted. The process of his withdrawal from the confines of the party determined politics, which had started earlier, reached its culmination.

At the sarvodaya conference in Bodhi Gaya in 1954 Jayaprakash announced the acceptance of the philosophy of jeevandan, that is dedication of his life to bhoodan and all that went with it to the exclusion of whatever related to politics. It stands to reason that his decision to withdraw from active politics was not taken in a huff. He must have thought things over before opting out. It would be doing injustice to his intelligence to suggest that he was convinced that bhoodan was the only desirable philosophy of life, that it alone could show the way to man's salvation, social, economic and political. On the contrary, it would be a safe guess that he must have had his doubts, that he must have felt that his withdrawal from the party would tear apart not only the party but the socialist movement, of which he had been the foremost builder. Yet, he deserted the party. But why? Could it be that his conflict with Lohia was one of the most important considerations which influenced his decision to confuse the party.

It may be said that the evolution of Jayaprakash's thought, his approach to men and affairs, is sought to be explained in terms of personal factors, nearly omitting other factors. This argument will not stand scrutiny. Nevertheless, even if the point is conceded it would be clear that the conditions of life in India demanded quite the opposite of almost every political move he made, particularly after the party left Congress. The need for a principled, organised and democratic opposition with a radical economic philosophy, which could provide an alternative to Congress, could never be overstated. The relations of forces and factors at the national level were such that PSP could well play that role if it seriously addressed itself to

the job on the basis of the Pachmarhi thesis.

The party had a fine heritage of long participation in the national struggle for freedom, a young and intelligent leadership internationally known for its ability to inject a fresh breath of ideas into the conventional concept of democratic socialism, and hosts of activists who had their baptism of politics fighting for freedom. This was an asset Jayaprakash's scheme of politics did not seem to be intended not to fritter away. Could it, honestly, be said that he was unaware of the tragic implications of his actions?

CHAPTER IV

Exit and Reentry

Well before he formally announced his withdrawal from politics Jayaprakash had systematically disparaged the party system. Now and again, he cautioned the socialists that the party system was not the right vehicle for transporting them to their destination. On the other hand, the bhoodan-sarvodaya-jeevandan²¹⁰ compound offered the most dependable tool for realising the ideal socialists had set themselves.

Addressing the first annual conference of the Bombay city unit of the Praja Socialist Party in December 1953, he asserted that both communism and democratic socialism, as practised in Soviet Russia and Western Europe respectively, had failed. While communism, "where it is victorious, has ended up in state capitalism and dictatorship," the West European concept of democratic socialism "has become only a parliamentary or legalistic creed."

He therefore concluded that "both the methods of violence and parliamentary action have failed." In the circumstances, socialists should reorient their course towards Gandhism, which "offers the third alternative of revolution by nonviolent mass action." An inspiring symbol of this, said Jayaprakash, was "Vinoba's bhoodan movement."

He advised the socialists not to follow "the Western method of establishing socialism by law" or concern themselves only "with political action and the struggle for power." They must realise that socialism could not be ushered in "by legislation and state power." Should they "persist in this legalistic concept of social revolution" they

²¹⁰Jeevandan signified dedication of one's life to a cause, in this case, as Jayaprakash defined, "to all that for which bhoodan stands." See Jayaprakash Narayan, *Jeevandan*; Published by Rohit Dave for Janata, Bombay, no date, p 3.

would eventually face "the same disillusionment as socialists in the West."

This tragic fate could be avoided if only the socialists agreed to learn the right lessons from Gandhi, Jayaprakash said. The point he emphasised was the socialists should imbibe the spirit of Gandhism which did "not concentrate on the capture of state power but goes direct to the people and helps them to effect the revolution in their lives and consequently in the life of the community. Support from the state power would be assured once the power of the people has been created. In this manner the Gandhian technique necessarily goes beyond the confines of party and class, because it aims at converting, or revolutionising, members of all parties and classes."²¹

There was nothing exceptionable in his argument that law alone could not be considered the ideal tool for creating a socialist society. No socialist worth his salt would ever suggest this either, particularly in the Indian or, for that matter, any underdeveloped context. It was and still is the experience that law may be an important tool of change, but it is certainly not the only valid tool. Also, Jayaprakash's emphasis on people's power, or, *lokshakti*, as against state power, or *rajshakti*, was quite understandable. But the other points he raised, his brief against the party system, were not intended to help remove the ideological confusion he had generated in the party.

Still more perplexing was his pleading some months later, in support of electoral understanding between PSP and the Communist Party in the midterm elections scheduled to take place in Travancore-Cochin (now Kerala). It could hardly be denied that this totally contradicted his latest stance in politics. He had already announced his withdrawal from active politics, though not from the membership of PSP. Retention of party was rationalised, and this was done to suit the requirements of his friends

²¹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Beyond Confining of a Party," *Towards Total Revolution* Vol 2, *op cit*; pp 230-32.

of PSP who were at loggerheads with Lohia.

In defending his plea for an electoral agreement he however told an interviewer that he had "no ideological consideration in mind while suggesting an electoral arrangement with CPI [Communist Party of India]." According to Jayaprakash, there were only two considerations which weighed with him—"interests of PSP and...the urgent need of creating a strong opposition."²¹² Otherwise, the whole manoeuvre was devoid of ideological content. It was simply a matter of expediency, a question of PSP's survival that determined his approach. This problem of immediate interest of PSP seemed to have induced him to forget his talk of ethical and moral values in politics. This influenced him to short-circuit the test of immediacy, to which he had so approvingly referred at the Asian Socialist Conference not very long before. This of course was not the first, nor certainly the last, occasion when Jayaprakash virtually cast off what was supposed to be the sheetanchor of his philosophy of life. It may be mentioned that Lohia also modified his earlier stand on electoral agreement with the communists and supported an electoral adjustment with the united front of leftists, including the communists, in Travancore-Cochin.

With a rare display of consistency, which was very much unlike him, Jayaprakash continued doing everything that could not but hasten the process of destabilization of the party. This is not to suggest that he was knowingly at it, but the effect of the political line he pursued added up to just that. What he said in his exposition of the concept of *jeevandan*, some time in 1954, would substantiate this. *Jeevandan*, according to Jayaprakash, was an essential aspect *bhoodan* and whoever accepted it did so "to the exclusion of every other activity, including politics." Himself a *jeevandani* he insisted that the *bhoodan-jeevandan* compound was "the beginning of an all-round social and human revolution... It is an application on a general scale

²¹²Jayaprakash Narayan, "Social Dynamics;" *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *ibid*; pp 233-34.

of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent technique of revolution."

At another place he averred that *bhoodan* had its politics, too. The fact was that "*bhoodan* is itself an intensely and deeply political movement," he said. But politics in the contest of *bhoodan-jeevandan* could not be equated with "the politics of parties, elections, parliaments and governments" which he preferred to identify as *rajniti*, or politics of the state, after Vinoba. While the politics of *bhoodan* was "politics of the people" or *lokniti* as Vinoba says," Jayaprakash clarified. His conception of *lokniti*, or people's politics, which would become a recurring theme later, at this stage 'was coterminous with the *bhoodan-jeevandan* mix. Other than *bhoodan-jeevandan* there was nothing "worthier of our support or devotion," he told his fellow socialists who were simultaneously assured that *jeevandan*-is...are not expected to forsake their hearth and home, their wives and children."

Jayaprakash went to the heart of the matter when he gave PSP cardholders a definite assurance that "if a *jeevandani* belongs to any political party and believes that membership of the party does not conflict with the theory and practice of *bhoodan*, he may retain his membership." But he would have to make a sacrifice by denying himself the pleasure of holding "any office or elective post" and would not "for life ... be able to participate in elections."

Of course he could exercise his right of franchise, Jayaprakash explained, "as his conscience tells him."²¹³ The expose tells its own tale. Still, one cannot help wondering whether the ingeniously designed escape hatch, which allowed a "*jeevandani* to keep his party membership," was also intended to relieve Jayaprakash of any possible conflict to conscience, considering that he had accepted *bhoodan-jeevandan* as a wholetime pursuit and abandoned politics but held on to his membership of PSP.

Only an exceptionally indulgent adulator could find fault with most of the criticism all this provoked within the

²¹³Jayaprakash Narayan, *Jeevandan*, *op cit*, pp 3, 8, 10-12.

party and outside. Others apart, Lohia and men of his way of thinking loudly expressed their concern about the drift of affairs in the party. Their differences sharply increased as the days passed, and these did not remain under the surface either. Lohia's assessment of Jayaprakash, which most thinking, active socialists accepted, made it evident that the binding factors in the party had all but disappeared. This could be gathered from Lohia's caustic observation that "present-day Gandhism in all its manifestation is an attempt to use the word of Gandhi in order to kill his soul. This continual talk of nonviolence and moral values...is increasingly irritating people away from a purposeful pursuit of nonviolent action."²¹⁴

Sometime later, in the mid-1950s, Lohia said: "Instead of seeking to elaborate a new doctrine of Gandhism, it would be far more desirable if the contents of Gandhiji's life and action were to operate on systems that already exist.... As to capitalism and communism, one may doubt if these can be influenced, considering that they are closed. But for socialism Gandhiji's action may well act as a filter through which socialist ideas flow and get rid of their dross or as the strain which may colour them generally."²¹⁵

The crisis came to a head in 1954, when the Congress-supported minority PSP government in Travancore-Cochin²¹⁶ resorted to police firing on unarmed demonstrators. As the party's general secretary, Lohia,²¹⁷ insisted that the minority PSP government should immediately resign from office. His argument was that a socialist

²¹⁴Rammanohar Lohia, "Lucknow Revolt", *Will to Power*; *op cit*, p 40.

²¹⁵Rammanohar Lohia, "Gandhi and Socialism", *Prism*, Vol, 1, Nos 1 & 2, May-June 1979, New Delhi, p 29.

²¹⁶PSP had only 19 members in the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly while the Communist Party and Congress had 28 and 45 members respectively.

²¹⁷At that time Lohia was detained in prison for leading a farmer's movement on irrigation in Uttar Pradesh. No other socialist leader had so often suffered arrests in independent India for resistance to unjust laws and to initiate people's struggles.

government, which was pledged to uphold people's rights, had no right, no matter what the provocation might be, to subject unarmed agitators to police firing.

As he put it a couple of years later, he firmly believed that "if the socialist movement had agreed to sacrifice its paltry ministry in Travancore-Cochin for the sake of establishing democratic principles in relation to law and order, it would have become today the conscience of India."²¹⁸

Opinions in the party were sharply divided on this issue. Assured of the support of some senior leaders, including Jayaprakash, the Pattom Thanu Pillai-shepherded Travancore-Cochin minority PSP government, which was in office on Congress sufferance, refused to oblige Lohia. Lohia resigned the general secretaryship of the party, accusing the dominant segment of the leadership of compromising the basic principle of democratic socialism.

This rocked the party, already ideologically unstable and deeply furrowed by Jayaprakash's innovative politics, from stem to stern and eventually split it down the middle. In July 1955, the party accepted Jayaprakash's resolution recommending that Lohia and some of his associates be disciplined for indulging in anti-party activities. It was strange indeed that Jayaprakash, who had given up active politics, should be "the driving force behind my expulsion from PSP," Lohia said subsequently.²¹⁹ Betul was avenged but at a price and exorbitant too.

An accomplished tactician, Lohia applied his energies to so manoeuvre a split in the party that the other side would appear to be responsible for it. He got it almost as he had desired, and Jayaprakash, who had supposedly placed himself on a higher moral plane and forsaken active politics, was obliged to oversee the exercise to initiate disciplinary action against Lohia and thus help him break the party. At a seven-day conference (28 Decem-

²¹⁸Rammanohar Lohia, *Socialist Unity* (Narayan-Lohia Correspondence Press Cuttings Speeches of Lohia), Samajwadi Prakashan; Hyderabad, 1957, p 43.

²¹⁹*Ibid*, p 44.

ber 1955—3 January 1956) in Hyderabad, Lohia launched a new party, naming it the Socialist Party. According to Lohia, he did this because there was "no other way" to resolve the "crisis" confronting PSP "on the two issues of radical politics and internal democracy." He was in fact convinced that "the role of the Praja Socialist Party...has become superfluous in Indian politics."²²⁰

The exit of Lohia from PSP apparently gave Jayaprakash the opportunity he had been looking for, to remould the party in such a manner that he could use it, along with *bhoodan-sarvodaya* conglomerate, in his pursuit of creating an alternative political system that could take care of the country's basic socioeconomic problems. But PSP, such as it was then, could hardly be of much use to him. To make it unable, it was necessary not only to keep it alive but also nurse it back to health. This Jayaprakash alone could do, his friends and colleagues told him.

Not that Jayaprakash was unaware of this. Nor of the fact that PSP did not have many members who could help it to withstand Lohia's remorseless campaign to demolish it. Another disturbing thought that seemed to occupy his mind at this point was that Vinoba's scheme to things perhaps might not go far enough to meet his requirements. As he said in his convocation address to Mysore University on 29 November 1955, "after Gandhiji, the all sidedness comprehensive view of he took of the problem of society, went out of the movement he had created. Its political wing bid him goodbye as soon as it came to power ... The constructive or service wing, however, under Vinobaji's leadership had tried to carry on Gandhiji's work, but it lacks his comprehensiveness or wholeness. By confining itself mainly to rural India, it has left almost untouched the urban centres, which are centres of education and cultural life, of public opinion,

²²⁰Quoted in Bhola Chatterji, "Socialists Merge Their Identity," *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, 4 May 1977, p 4.

of government, business and trade."²²¹ And Jayaprakash apparently expected PSP to fill the gap.

But PSP must survive before it could be expected to fill the bill. To meet the challenge, Jayaprakash advised a course of action that was nothing short of undiluted opportunism. Apparently forgetting all he had said until then against substituting expediency for principle, he enjoined PSP to make electoral adjustments with the Communist Party in the second general election scheduled to be held in early 1957. This, he figured, might enable PSP to enlarge its parliamentary and legislative representation and thereby give it a breathing space.

An apprehended obstacle to pushing the scheme through was his much publicised declaration that he had withdrawn from "partisan politics." That however was not allowed to shackle him. To get over this awkward situation, Jayaprakash resorted to what was virtually an-exercise in rationalisation. If in the process he paid dearly in principle and policy, he could not at that juncture perhaps afford to be squeamish.

In defence of his action Jayaprakash said, in October 1956, that he was not unaware of "two contradictions in my present position." One of these was that his "wholehearted" commitment to "*sarvodaya* and desire to create nonviolent strength in the people" notwithstanding, he maintained his membership of a "political party" and desired "its success." The other was that he continued to be "a member of PSP but do not take up the responsibility of working for it." He could not do so because "*sarvodaya* is not a power-oriented doctrine."

Elaborating this theme, Jayaprakash regretted that Congress, contrary to expectations, did not "accept *sarvodaya* as an ideal ... Nehru has not done what he could have done for the advance of *sarvodaya*." This did not mean that PSP had taken to *sarvodaya*. But Jayaprakash was doing his "best to bring the party as near *sarvodaya* as

²²¹Jayaprakash Narayan, 'Mass Movement and Social Action,' *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 3, op cit, pp 37-38.

possible. The world socialist movement is increasingly becoming aware of the values of *sarvodaya*."

"Socialism could not however be achieved "unless there is a well organised party which is working for it with faith and will", Jayaprakash observed further. Since he could "never imagine Congress to be such a party", and that "because of one individual," he would rather PSP do the job.²²² "In the present conditions of our country," Jayaprakash emphasised, "a party of democratic socialism like PSP has a historic task to fulfil. It must accept this responsibility and work for it."

Explaining his move for an electoral understanding between PSP and the Communist Party, Jayaprakash observed that opposition was an essential aspect of democracy and there should therefore be "at least two well-organised and well-knit political parties" in the country. But it was "not in the interest of the country that there should be polarisation between Congress and the communist or communal organisations. The party in opposition should also be pledged to nationalism and democracy. From this point of view PSP is the only party that can legitimately fulfil the role of the party in opposition."

Jayaprakash also stressed that he "would not like the Communist Party to become an alternative to Congress because it does not believe in democracy and nonviolence. Friends ask me how do I then justify electoral understanding or adjustment with them." His answer was that there was nothing wrong with his advocacy of electoral agreement between PSP and the Communist Party, for the "electoral adjustments I have advocated have nothing to do with ideological or theoretical understanding." It had been done just to "avoid division of opposition votes in the coming election." He was confident that "an electoral agreement between PSP and the Communist Party"

²²²The allusion obviously was to Jawaharlal Nehru. Nevertheless Jayaprakash continued to turn to Nehru with all manner of requests and praised him, after his death, for prevailing upon Congress to accept socialism as its ultimate goal.

would not have any adverse effect on *bhoodan*. The reason was simple, or so Jayaprakash thought. "*Bhoodan* had nothing to do with elections and there was no reason why any difficulty should arise because of electoral adjustments."²²³

This may profitably be contrasted with another line of approach Jayaprakash had kept as a stand-by to tackle the problem of PSP's survival. Even as he was justifying electoral understanding between PSP and the Communist Party, he did not rule out PSP-Congress cooperation at all levels. In the above-mentioned essay he observed that "PSP could cooperate with the government in the legislature and outside for constructive tasks." But he desired it to be brought about in a manner that would not embarrass PSP. His point of view was that "it was for the ruling Congress to first put out its hand of cooperation. The initiative must come from them. A comparatively weak party like PSP is not expected to make a move in this direction." Jayaprakash was afraid a move "will be misunderstood. That will have a bad effect on the people. It will be said that the leaders are anxious to share power and are therefore betraying their principles."²²⁴

It would be less than true to deny that Jayaprakash did not permit other considerations to influence his thinking when it came to giving his mite to PSP's cause in the second general election. He did this in full awareness of the fact that his position was hardly tenable, that it did not even have an appearance of rationality. More there was the chilling criticism that he allowed himself to indulge in double-talk and double-think. This found ample reflection in his press statement of 18 February 1957: "Perhaps there are persons who derive pleasure from trying to establish that Jayaprakash says one thing and does another; "since the issue has been raised again" he wanted it clearly understood that he had "given up...

²²³Jayaprakash Narayan, "Sarvodaya and Party Politics", *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, op cit, pp 243-44, 46.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p 245.

party and power politics," no more.

This did not suggest he had opted "out of politics in the broad sense of the term." As a matter of fact, "no citizen, even if he was nothing to do with party and power politics, can remain apathetic when things go wrong... The *sarvodaya* movement would betray its ideals if it did not play the role of a corrective force." And so he would advise the people to judiciously exercise their right of franchise, that "the most important issue this time is that of the absoluteness of Congress power."

A solution to this was urgent. It should not be forgotten, Jayaprakash repeated, that "the ruling party has been in the enjoyment of absolute power for the last ten years. It is high time that this is broken; otherwise there is grave peril to democracy." In the circumstances, the people would be well advised to elect such opposition candidates as were most likely to serve their interests. Two points should not be lost sight of. He did not dispute that "the opposition is divided" and that "multiplicity of parties is also a danger to democracy."

Was there any reason why this should not change in the coming years? None at all, said Jayaprakash. Rather, he was of the opinion that "there would be five years [between then and the next general election] in which the opposition forces would regroup themselves and develop strength and coherence so as to be able to function more effectively." The premise of his argument seemed to have been that parliamentary democracy could not be worked fruitfully unless the Congress monopoly of power was curbed and a viable alternative to that party engineered.

Since past experience confirmed that opposition parties and groups were incapable of playing that role severally they would have to be mobilised into doing it collectively. In this, the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement would also have to be prevailed upon to play a part. The general election offered an excellent opportunity to put this idea to the test. Should the opposition parties fail to rise to the occasion, it "would be a proof of their incapacity to run parlia-

mentary democracy. Therefore," Jayaprakash concluded, "to hustle them every time into choosing the ruling party for fear of chaos is to thwart the growth of political maturity of the people."²²⁵

As we shall see later, these equations would largely determine Jayaprakash's future political line. The idioms he used had a striking similarity to those with which his speeches and writings were dotted in the 1970s. After his repeated efforts to persuade the radical Congressmen to share his understanding of the challenge of change the country faced had failed, he veered round to Lohia's thesis a decade after Lohia had propounded it. The thesis was that nothing would change in India unless the Congress monopoly of power was liquidated. To accomplish this it was imperative that the opposition parties, irrespective of their ideological variations, should club together.

Though Jayaprakash acted virtually as PSP's guide, philosopher and friend in the second general election, the party came nowhere near to fulfilling his expectations. The elections left PSP in a dismal state. It was not at all difficult for Jayaprakash to appreciate that PSP could not possibly be shaped into the kind of tool he needed for his politics. Perhaps he regretted having dealt a sledgehammer blow to the united party. To retrieve the disaster, he initiated a dialogue with Lohia for uniting the two parties.

The unity move drew a blank, partly because of Lohia's rigid attitude and Jayaprakash's misconceptions, and substantially because some senior PSP leaders were determined to frustrate it. That some of these leaders were exploring the possibility of finding a berth in Congress future events would confirm. Lohia's subsequent statement would in a way not only bear this out but also applaud Jayaprakash. In a statement to newsmen on 1 September 1957, he said that Jayaprakash "is a mass man capable of big good as well as big harm. Most other leaders of PSP are small men... These men checkmated him

²²⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "An Appeal to Voters," *ibid*, pp 251-54.

in the effort of socialist unification."²²⁶

Reference may be made here to another incisive comment that Lohia made on Jayaprakash. In the course of a speech in Calcutta, on 14 August 1957, Lohia observed that "a paralysed Jayaprakash has been and will be a danger to the nation, while an activated and radical Jayaprakash can become a powerful force in reconstructing the country."²²⁷ Few had underscored the essential Jayaprakash so perspicaciously as Lohia. He predeceased Jayaprakash by over a decade, but Jayaprakash seemed to have lived as if to vindicate partly Lohia's assessment of him.

Jayaprakash was "after all," as Lohia observed, "a mass man and has therefore changed his outlook"²²⁸ when he broached, on his own initiative, the subject of unification of PSP and SP. It was not beyond him to comprehend the fact that irreparable damage had been done to the socialist movement, that neither the fragmented PSP nor the *bhoodun-sarvodaya* movement would, severally or collectively, be able to spearhead the kind of movement which alone could engineer the basic socioeconomic changes he had in mind.

Jayaprakash's hopes were shattered. The negative role most PSP leaders, whom he had groomed, played in regard to the socialist unification talks was something he had not expected. This no doubt embarrassed him greatly. A more disquieting fallout was the resulting widening of the credibility gap relating to his efforts to reconcile his withdrawal from active politics with his espousal, as PSP's spokesman, of unity talks with Lohia.

Success of the unity move could perhaps have saved the situation, and the entire perspective would then have changed. But men, circumstances and events did not oblige him. Out of disgust and in a belated attempt to salvage the situation Jayaprakash resigned membership of PSP.

²²⁶Rammanohar Lohia, *Socialist Unity*, op cit, p 45

²²⁷*Ibid*, p 43

²²⁸*Ibid*, p 46

Towards the end of August 1957 he wrote to Ganga Sharan Sinha, then chairman of PSP: "I am freeing myself from the membership of the party... I will not in future do anything in regard to the question of unity."²²⁹

The exodus of Lohia along with his colleagues from PSP and formation of the Socialist Party, Jayaprakash's formal exit from party politics and bitter quarrels among socialists faithful to either of the two parties, mostly about non-issues, these marked the end of an epoch, and along with it that of a rich and glorious heritage. This was a tragic development for the socialists. The sequence of events and situations, for which the socialists alone were responsible, pulverised the socialist movement in a manner neither Congress nor the communists could have hoped to. It was rightly said that the socialists were their worst enemies, Jayaprakash leading the way.

What was it that Jayaprakash wanted to achieve, and how? What was the point that weighed with him when he took to a course which contributed the most to destabilising the socialist movement? Before an attempt is made to answer these questions Jayaprakash may be allowed his say. In December 1957, after socialist unity talks with Lohia broke down, he issued a long statement explaining his position to his PSP colleagues in particular and to the Indian people in general. That statement deserves to be reproduced at length as it is supposed to record, in Jayaprakash's words, the "revolution of my own ideas."

Expressing on a rather sentimental note his confidence that "if the world were ever to reach the port of peace and freedom and brotherhood, socialism must eventually merge into *sarvodaya*," he said that "the faith and hope that people seem to repose in politics appear pitiable to me." Because politics, and "socialism as we understand it today cannot take mankind to the sublime goals of freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace...unless socialism is transformed into *sarvodaya*, those goals would remain beyond its reach."

²²⁹*Free Press Journal*, Bombay, 29 August 1957.

Then Jayaprakash touched on the problem of "materialism and goodness" emphasising that "materialism as a philosophical outlook could not provide any basis for ethical conduct and any incentive for goodness." To his regret he found that "socialism and communism both lay great emphasis on material prosperity, on ever-growing production and on an ever-rising standard of living." Not however that "the material wants of man" should not be "reasonably fulfilled." Much as society must attend to this, it would be an entirely wrong approach "here or elsewhere to apotheosise material happiness and encourage an outlook on life that feeds on insatiable hunger for material goods." For this would endanger peace, "all values of life," in fact, "equality, freedom, brotherhood would all be in danger of being submerged in a universal flood of materialism."

If Jayaprakash was speaking the truth, that was the thought which impelled him to withdraw from party politics. It was not out of "disgust" or of "any personal frustration" that he decided to give up "party-and-power politics." He abandoned politics "because it became clear to me that politics could not deliver the goods, the goods being the same old goals of equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace." And the search for an alternative to politics took him back to Gandhi, whose concept of politics was "not *rajniti* (politics of the state) but *lokniti* (politics of the people)."

It was however a long-drawn-out process he had to go through before he could finally extricate himself from politics. As he put it, "the questions raised by politics kept humming in my head...urging me to seek an alternative. The party system, with the corroding and corrupting struggle for power inherent in it, disturbed me more and more." The deeper he got into the problem of party politics, the more he came to believe that "the party system...was emasculating the people... All that the parties were concerned with was to capture power for themselves so as to rule over the people." What appeared to him to be more damaging was that "the party system was seeking to

reduce the people to the position of sheep whose only function of sovereignty would be to choose periodically the shepherds who would look after their welfare! This to me did not spell freedom," and so he discarded *rajniti* and opted for *lokniti*.

The long statement delineating Jayaprakash's newfound philosophy of life and politics, whose basic components were *bhoodan*, *sarvodaya* and *lokniti* or partyless politics, terminated on a somewhat altered note. Amending the observation he had made a little earlier, he emphasised that "it was not the ugliness of politics that repelled me, but the attraction of the new politics of *sarvodaya* that drew me." His understanding of the politics of *sarvodaya* was that it could "have no party and no concern with power." In other words, *sarvodaya* politics was coterminous with *lokniti*, politics of the people, "as distinct from *rajniti*," politics of the state. And the politics of *sarvodaya*, if rightly pursued, should lead to "withering away of the state." After all, "human freedom could be fully and wholly realised only in a stateless society."

Lest this should convey the impression that Jayaprakash had taken to otherworldly politics, he added in the same breath that there was no "hostility between *rajniti* and *lokniti*... *Lokniti* is but the child of *rajniti*. Between the two there must be constant contact and cooperation."

He took care to get the message across that he meant to keep all his options open: "I should also add that though all my energies would be bent towards developing *lokniti*, I shall not shut my eyes to what happens in the sphere of *rajniti*. For good or ill, *rajniti* does to some extent influence the lives of the people." Therefore, he would take it upon himself to ensure "from the outside...that influence is as salutary as possible." Not that he did not realise that he might be "misunderstood and charged with playing politics." But that could not be helped—"perhaps one cannot always avoid misunderstandings in public life."²³⁰

²³⁰Jayaprakash Narayan; *From Sarvodaya to Socialism*, op cit; pp 6-7, 26-27, 30-32, 34-35, 37, 53-54.

It may not be to everybody's liking if it is said that this was precisely the opening Jayaprakash used to reenter politics in the 1970s. Not only that, almost every important point he highlighted in this prolix statement was circumvented by him, as we shall see later, to meet the exigencies of his confrontation with the regime. This is not to suggest that he was less than true to his profession of faith, or that his commitment was less than total when it came to working in the cause of the goal he had set himself. It is just that his categories of thoughts and ideas, the yardstick he used for assessing men and events, his scale of priorities, his understanding of the realities of life, all these were made to vary so frequently that he was apparently constrained to stand in his own light.

After Jayaprakash formally withdrew from membership of PSP it was generally expected however that this would end his wonted habit of riding two horses simultaneously. That did not happen. Instead of devoting all his energies to shaping the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement into a tool for reconstructing society he continued to have a finger in every pie.

Take, for example, his address to the fifth national conference of PSP held in Bombay on 5-9 November 1959. He had formally resigned from PSP over two years before, condemning the party system as an enemy of democracy. Yet he agreed to address the conference and used its platform to mount a scathing attack not only on the party system but also Nehru. He did it as if to lend more substance to his critics' allegation that his scheme of politics had, other things apart, a large element of infantilism.

The point he wanted to get across was that he left PSP because he had "come to believe that the party system of democracy is imperfect." As for an alternative to the party system, he would have it believed that "*sarvodaya* alone can help us solve our problems and that I have come to this conclusion after 25 years of practical experience in the socialist movement."

And then he suddenly started whistling a tune that seemed to suggest that a particular statement or action

could not be taken as an indicator of the working of his mind. What interpretation can be given to the sarcastic remark he made when speaking to the national conference: "Congress accepted socialism at the bidding of one man, Jawaharlal Nehru, without being convinced about it"?

His subsequent remark would easily pass for an exceptional instance of conceit and boastfulness, with a little pettiness thrown in. Jayaprakash took umbrage at Nehru's failure, while hitching Congress to socialism, "to consult those who had been in the Congress fold and had left it precisely because Congress would not accept socialism. It seemed as if Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to show that he had achieved single handed what Yusuf Meherally, Narendra Deva, Achyut Patwardhan, Asoka Mehta, Jayaprakash and others put together could not achieve." Even the philosopher of partyless democracy based on *bhoodan-sarvodaya* was not generous enough to bury the hatchet, at least in this instance, and mention Lohia's name.

It seemed Jayaprakash was unable to detach himself from partisan politics notwithstanding his repeated assertion to the contrary. Nor could he submerge himself in the thought world of Gandhi and start building up from the grassroot level men and institutions that could project a picture of faith and convey an idea of tomorrow's society. Rather, he was still pegged to the small world of PSP, *real politick* and Nehru. This would be evident from what he said further in the course of his address to the PSP conference: "If Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress want to build a system based on democratic socialism in India, it will be their duty to approach PSP and secure its co-operation."

In the same breath he cautioned PSP that "Congressmen will not be comfortable in your company, more so, Jawaharlal Nehru, who can perhaps be aptly described as a democratic dictator... The greatest obstacle in the way of a speedy and decisive advance of socialism in India is Jawaharlal Nehru." Jayaprakash however "would ardently wish the coming together of socialists inside Congress... PSP and other democratic socialist elements in the country

and thus founding a new and powerful socialist party. Such a consummation alone can give a push to the movement." But Jayaprakash was "afraid Nehru may be the greatest opponent of such a consummation."²³¹ Even if this were possible it would not usher in socialism, Jayaprakash added. For "the old, beaten track to socialism has been tried and found wanting." Therefore, Jayaprakash invited PSP to join him and "look for a new path, search and research for it."²³²

Some 14 months before this, in September 1958, Jayaprakash had been invited to address members of Parliament after his return from a visit to Europe. What he told the country's legislators, and through them the people, revealed a mind that seemed intent on reasoning with wrong premises. He wanted his listeners to believe that "from Cairo to Baghdad I found the new leaders of the revolutionary Arab world concerned with the problems of democracy and socialism."

Not only that, "nearly all of them said they wanted to establish in their countries or regions a democratic socialist," society Jayaprakash said. If this was reassuring, no less so was the fact that he "found that nowhere have these leaders dared allow the party system to function." They did not do it, as they told Jayaprakash, not because they were dictators or wanted to become dictators. Much as the West might denigrate some of them as fascists, they had nothing to do with fascism.

The party system was not viable in their part of the world because "chaos" would inevitably come in the wake of political parties, the Arab leaders confided to

²³¹One would have thought that Jayaprakash's assessment of Nehru being what it was he would give the latter a wide berth. As we have already seen, he did not do so. More, he even approached Nehru for personal favours from time to time. See appendix G for photocopy of Nehru's letter to Jayaprakash which speaks for itself.

²³²Jayaprakash Narayan, "Search for New Horizons," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, pp 261-64, 266-268.

Jayaprakash. In their language, "America will spend millions to buy all our politicians and to finance our political parties. The Russians will try to do the same. And what would happen to our democracy?"

Jayaprakash would have the members of Parliament accept that the mere existence of "opposition parties is no guarantee of democracy. The real guarantee is the faith of the people in democracy and their strength and capacity to run it. This is not happening in our country." If the situation did not change for the better, which was rather unlikely, "anything may emerge; even a dictatorship, of the Left or Right, one does not know. Just because the people participate in elections once in five years to choose their representatives does not mean there is democracy." But, he observed "it is possible to develop a party-less democracy."²³³ From this to his admiration for Field Marshal Ayub Khan's "basic democracy" in Pakistan was not a very long leap.

For the nth time the pitfalls of the party system were elaborately depicted and the virtues of *bhoodan-sarvodaya* and nonparty democracy vigorously commended as a certain cure for every conceivable affliction of society. Socialists hoped there would be no further deflection, any more, that Jayaprakash was all set for keeping his tryst with destiny. But Jayaprakash did not appear to have thought so. At any rate that was what his letter to the chairman of PSP would suggest.

Regretting his inability to accept the chairman's invitation to attend the party's Calcutta conference in June 1960, Jayaprakash said that although he had put his trust in and was "working for a nonparty democracy, I would like to see parliamentary democracy ... to work as successfully as possible."⁴ For he was afraid "failure of this experiment may not prepare the ground so much for my concept of democracy, but for a one-party government which would be a tragedy for India and perhaps also for

²³³Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Party System in Underdeveloped Countries," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *op cit*, pp 177-78.

Asia."

He did not therefore think there were contrarities in "working for a nonparty democracy and at the same time wishing the success of parliamentary democracy," particularly considering it would do society no good to "let the present experiment fail" before "a better alternative system" could be created. The argument was stretched to emphasise at once the importance of "an effective opposition" in parliamentary democracy and its near absence in India.

Up to this point Jayaprakash's argument apparently had a certain cogency. But the remedy he prescribed was the least expected of him. His advice to the opposition parties, particularly PSP, was that they should agree not to split their votes in the third general election that was about a year away. As Jayaprakash put it, "the opposition parties owe it to the people to so arrange among themselves, despite their own ideological and programmatic differences, as to give the voters a chance to correctly express themselves at the polls."

He ridiculed those who thought that electoral unity among parties with conflicting ideologies and programmes ran counter to the very concept of principled politics. "It is a sign of political immaturity," Jayaprakash said, "to think that parties in order to come to a working electoral arrangement, so as to avoid triangular or multi-angular contests, must have a common ideological basis. Nor does such a working arrangement necessarily involve any kind of united front or joint campaign or any understanding as to post-election arrangements ... wherever I have spoken to party members I have made it clear that my suggestion to make such an agreement, for instance with CPI, had no ideological considerations whatever underlying it." As a matter of fact, "I never suggested that PSP should single out CPI for an electoral adjustment ... I named other parties with which such an adjustment should be sought." If this was incompatible with all that Jayaprakash had been preaching after his withdrawal from active politics, what he said by way of qualifying

his stand did not exactly strengthen his title to moral leadership of Indian society. Much as he might campaign for PSP's electoral understanding with all and sundry, he was "totally opposed to what is known as a united front. PSP should fight the elections on its own ticket. ... There should be no joint campaigning. Socialists should not work for communists or other parties, nor want their help. Apart from the agreement to avoid contests between opposition candidates, I have nothing further in view."

In further elucidation of this line of approach Jayaprakash admitted the possibility of "danger in this." It was not improbable, he said, that "weak and opportunist candidates may not keep themselves within these limits, and the communists with their usual disloyalty to the pledged word, may tempt them too far." Still "this risk has to be taken." And he harped on this even as he did not rule out the chance of "still greater danger, namely, the post-election temptation to try to form a coalition with anyone."

Clarifying his position, he observed that he was "not opposed to a coalition with any opposition party, but I am opposed to a coalition with the communists." The reason for his opposition to such a coalition was that he was "not sure if their attitude to democracy and their subservience to Russia have changed in any vital manner." He hastened to add that there was nothing to indicate any change in the communist attitude, but "as I do not see any alternative, I am prepared to advise the party to take the risk."

Although Jayaprakash did not recommend PSP's electoral agreement with Congress because "an electoral adjustment with the ruling party would be betrayal of the electorate," he would not dismiss the idea of conditional "cooperation with Congress." Of course, "that question does not arise at the moment. When it does, the party can judge the issue after taking all relevant facts into consideration." Taking all things into consideration, Jayaprakash appealed to PSP to see to it that "difference of opinion on the electoral policy" did not "lead to further

disruption in the party."²³⁴ It is another matter however that PSP did not act up to his advice at the time of the elections.

Jayaprakash was evidently in no mood to close any of his options. The argument in favour of electoral adjustment in the given context was a blatant instance of allowing expediency to determine policy for ephemeral gains. No question of principle was involved, and the basic concern of Jayaprakash, the philosopher of nonparty democracy, was the survival of PSP, weakening Lohia's Socialist Party to the fullest extent possible, and clipping the Congress wings. The question of Jayaprakash's abstention from partisan politics did not arise. He was very much in it in behalf of PSP.

About this time Jayaprakash could be heard to speak on a wavelength that was entirely different from the one he had used a little earlier. That was when he held a brief for a certain electoral strategy that he wanted PSP to follow in the third general election. While addressing, in November 1960, the Asian Socialist Conference²³⁵ at Bombay Jayaprakash was apprehensive that "a real danger has arisen of the ideals and principles being forgotten or being given a back seat and the means or the doctrines being mistaken for the former. Socialists are faced with this danger everywhere but more so in Asia."

Nobody in his right senses could possibly pick holes in this argument, every word of which sounded true. He seemed to have forgotten all about this weeks earlier when he argued PSP into opting for an electoral policy the justification for which could not perhaps be anything more principled than sheer pragmatism. Continuing, he said "construction of a socialist society is fundamentally

²³⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, "One Party Government," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2; *op cit*, pp 278-83.

²³⁵Although Rammanohar Lohia was the philosopher and chief architect of the Asian Socialist Conference, this organisation continued to recognise PSP, even after Lohia formed the Socialist Party, as the spokesman of the Indian socialist movement.

construction of a new type of human being."

As he understood it, "the most important question for socialism" was nothing but "how is such human reconstruction possible?" The answer was "a socialist movement, a mass movement of human reconstruction." As for "the dynamics of such a movement," he insisted on formulating "a new dynamics" that would be "in consonance with the ultimate values of socialism." One could of course depend on Gandhi, who "discovered a way of developing mass movements through internal change in man, mass moral revolutions."

It was however regrettable that "while Gandhiji's name is on the lips of every one here, our eyes are turned eagerly to others," observed Jayaprakash. "The lure of power is too great. ... The only exception is Vinoba Bhave and the small group of workers around him. His *bhoodan* movement ... is an experiment in the new social dynamics of which I have been speaking,"²³⁶ Jayaprakash asserted. Who would have thought that the same man could use, a little earlier, another kind of rhetoric to persuade PSP to accept his way of thinking on a particular form of electoral strategy that was indeed nothing more laudable than opportunism?

A year or so earlier, in September 1959, Jayaprakash thought out an elaborate scheme which he believed could offer a lasting solution to the country's otherwise intractable problems of politics and economics. Before his treatise — *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* — was formally published he sent a copy to others, including Prime Minister Nehru. It probably amused Nehru a little and intrigued him somewhat to be requested to give his whole attention to the blueprint for a polity the polar opposite of that which had claimed his loyalty all along.

The treatise in question could well be described as the quintessence of Jayaprakash's philosophy of politics. Out of material drawn from diverse sources, chiefly Gandhi,

²³⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "New Dynamics of Social Change," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *op cit*, pp 168, 170-71 173.

Salvador de Madariaga, Walter Lippman, Maurice Duverger and Erich Fromm, Jayaprakash moulded a system that could easily be mistaken for a surrealistic exercise. The line he took was that "the fundamental defect" of parliamentary democracy was that it was "based on the vote of the individual." This meant that "the system is based on a false premise — the state cannot be an arithmetic sum of individuals."

From this he went on to detail the evils of the party system which was "an inevitable concomitant of parliamentary democracy." He was convinced that political "parties have become a sort of state within the state. They are now the real arbiters of the people's fate, whose control over them is fictional ... Party rivalries ... give birth to demagoguery, depress political ethics, put a premium on unscrupulousness and aptitude for manipulation and intrigue."

The party system was bad, much too so to be of any good to society. But there was something worse still. As he put it, "for my part, *it is not the party system that is the main culprit, but parliamentary democracy* [italics are Jayaprakash's] itself, which gives rise to it."²³⁷ The alternative he suggested was a polity whose "foundation ... must necessarily be self-governing, self-sufficient, agro-industrial, urban-rural, local communities. The existing villages and townships provide the physical base for such reconstruction."

The concept of a non-party polity with which Jayaprakash wanted parliamentary democracy based on the party system to be replaced, was given a facelift in *Swaraj for the people*, published in 1961. He contended that "government by consent," which characterised "the Western concept of democracy...is not an adequate enough concept." It was therefore necessary to make efforts to take society "towards a more adequate democracy." The only way to meet

²³⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Plea for Reconstruction of Polity*, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, Wardha, 1959, pp 63, 69-71,

the challenge was to take "the next step beyond government by consent." According to Jayaprakash, this was nothing but "people's participation in government, or a participating democracy."

Adding a rider to it, Jayaprakash stressed that "a participating democracy" alone could "give people a stake in democracy as the sensation of *swaraj*." But such a democracy "could not be worked without a thorough-going system of political as well as economic decentralisation." Another point he sought to hammer in was that the edifice of a true participating democracy could be raised only on the basis of Panchayati Raj which again must be suitably structured to play its appointed role.

This was his idea of broadening the base of his contemplated non-party democracy so that its blessings might reach every hearth and altar in the nearly 600,000 villages of India. In this connection Jayaprakash referred to "the setting up of the national union in the UAR [United Arab Republic] and basic democracies in Pakistan." In his view the unmistakably authoritarian political frameworks, sought to be concealed by euphemistic nomenclature, rigged up by Gamal Abdel Nasser and Field Marshal Ayub Khan in Egypt and Pakistan respectively, were "some little advance in the promised direction."

The compliment, though guarded, paid to Ayub Khan's concept of basic democracy indicated the extent of Jayaprakash's unfailing knack of getting hold of the wrong end of the stick. It may be that partylessness being the common feature of both Ayub Khan's basic democracy and Jayaprakash's concept of Panchayati Raj on the basis of participating democracy, he was carried away by emotion.

It would otherwise be difficult to explain his enthusiasm, however limited, for Ayub Khan's unreservedly authoritarian system of polity. This of course is not meant to contradict his dictum that, in the given context, "refusal to hand over power and opportunity to the people for self-government would surely lead to complete corrosion of democracy in this country, and either to dec-

line and self-destruction or to some kind of dictatorship."²³⁸ But how? This was the crucial question to which Jayaprakash's answer was worse than the malaise.

Again, in an article published sometime in the third quarter of 1961 Jayaprakash observed that democracy had functioned so badly in the country that it had disillusioned large masses of the people. He squarely blamed the party system for this. His contention was that "the party has created a barrier between the people and the government," and until this obstacle was removed the situation would not change. His remarks about Nehru in this connection evidently contradicted his earlier assessment of the man.

For reasons best known to him Jayaprakash preferred to adopt a rather soft attitude to Nehru on this occasion. He still considered him "a man of rectitude." He believed Nehru would "not...do deliberately a thing which he knows is wrong. Yet Nehru's hands are tied. In the interest of the party [Congress] Nehru cannot act on any matter as he likes." What was the way out of this disquieting situation? Establishment of "a partyless democracy devoted to the welfare of the people," remembering that "the party system has been responsible for dissipation of national energy, efforts and concerted action."²³⁹

What was one expected to deduce from this? Only a short while before Jayaprakash had indicated he would stick at nothing in his campaign for electoral arrangement, blatantly expedient, just to ensure PSP's survival as a political party. And he was at that point second to none in the severity of his assessment of Nehru. And then all of a sudden he turned about and took up a new position that refuted his earlier stance.

Jayaprakash was supposed to be the repository of Gandhi's philosophy of politics. His understanding of Indian politics, be it of the ruling Congress or the opposi-

²³⁸Jayaprakash Narayan, *Swaraj for the People*; fifth reprint, Sarva Seva Sangh, Banaras, 1977, pp 5-7, 11, 29.

²³⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Party System Dissipates National Energy," *Hindustan Standard* (Puja Annual), Calcutta, 1961, pp 146-47.

tion parties, was that it could not be salvaged unless society agreed to take to the path *bhoodan-sarvodaya* indicated. In the given context it was not unnatural for people to look forward to Jayaprakash taking the field as the exponent of a *lokniti*-based alternative power centre to the *rajniti*-oriented power groupings. He believed power emanated from the people's faith in the superiority of the Gandhian concept of politics.

The new path of social revolution was to be determined by *bhoodan* and *sarvodaya*. In *sarvodaya* Jayaprakash had discovered "people's socialism," in Vinoba's movement he found a positive answer to the vexing question of methodology. In other words, his goal was people's socialism, the instrument to attain it *sarvodaya-bhoodan*, and Vinoba would lead the nation to its appointed place in the sun.

But the gap between the ideal and the concrete was allowed, deliberately or otherwise, to widen gradually, and Jayaprakash did not seem to care much about that. At any rate, his words and postures apparently supported this view. It would have been far-fetched to suggest that Jayaprakash was the legatee of the courage and conviction, singleness of purpose and determination that marked Gandhi. Everything else besides, there was no hint, indeed not yet, of what distinguished Gandhi from the rest, the stern indomitable will to go it alone should this be necessary, and blaze a trail that others might find irresistible to follow. In fact, all his attempts until then seemed to denote a desire to mould PSP in a manner that he could use it together with *bhoodan-sarvodaya* for his scheme of things. His efforts apparently were to get "the *sarvodaya*, movement, which is purely a social movement aiming at individual and social action, and the democratic socialist movement, which is purely a political movement aiming at political action,"²⁴⁰ to join hands to provide him with a tool for bringing about the change he desired. The need to fuse *bhoodan-sarvodaya*, that is as

²⁴⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, *Social Ownership and Statism;* *Towards Total Revolution* Vol 1, *op cit*, p 195.

much of it as would be amenable to his guidance, and PSP had almost become imperative, particularly since Vinoba could not quite be persuaded to see reason as others saw it.

Jayaprakash had by then realised that Vinoba's understanding of the challenge of change, his approach to men and affairs, was entirely different from Jayaprakash's. The reference to the nexus between Vinoba and the Congress establishment could not be laughed away as there was evidence for this. It was now beyond doubt that Vinoba would not allow the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement to develop into a vehicle for the kind of structural sociopolitical change that Jayaprakash had in mind.

At the same time Jayaprakash also realised that he could not walk out on Vinoba in a huff and return to the socialist movement for the break-up of which he could not disown his share of responsibility. Indeed, Jayaprakash had got himself into a fix. That was all the more reason why he wanted PSP not only to survive but remain strong. It was not beyond him to appreciate that he could do nothing unless he had the right tool.

An attempt may here be made to get a clear perspective on Jayaprakash's sojourn with *bhoodan*. He plunged into the movement towards the end of 1954, when at that point *bhoodan* beckoned him to attempt the impossible, to dare any danger. He discovered in it the promise of a final solution to the problem of man's existence. And Vinoba, who projected an image of the complete man, convinced him that "Gandhiji's philosophy" did "offer a practical method to accomplish the social revolution." More, Vinoba's words and actions encouraged Jayaprakash to infer that "a revolution in ideas and values" had been "set in motion."²⁴¹ The *bhoodan-sarvodaya* mix became his gospel, and Vinoba led him to open a new horizon in his thought and understanding.

In just about two decades *bhoodan*, the supposed herald

²⁴¹Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, op cit, p 49.

of "revolution by consent," betrayed itself as the handmaid of reaction. To get the point it would suffice to recall that the silver jubilee ceremonies of the *bhoodan* "movement, that had placed *lokshakti* and voluntary efforts at the centre of its nonviolent social revolution," as Prem Bhasin²⁴² remarked, "have been ordered by the Government of India and not sponsored by either the Sarva Seva Sangh or any other nonofficial body."²⁴³ Nothing could perhaps more glaringly expose the bankruptcy of Vinoba's exercise.

The *bhoodan* movement fizzled out because from the very outset Vinoba ensured that it was tied to the apron-strings of the establishment. When Jayaprakash joined *bhoodan* Vinoba saw to it that Jayaprakash got no chance to steer the movement in his own way. The movement, which was supposed to pioneer a "revolution through change of heart"²⁴⁴ and build a new society, allowed itself to be spoonfed by the central and state governments. In the years between 1955 and 1961, the movement received about Rs 2 million by way of subsidies from various state governments, while the central government "sanctioned schemes involving crores of rupees."

What promised to be a competent tool for a nonviolent social revolution degenerated fast into an establishment-patronised outfit to contain the forces of nonviolent social revolution. The oppressed and the exploited might regret this, but the fact remained that the *bhoodan* movement "came to depend increasingly on state help and munificence, reducing it, at its worst, to a virtual part of the establishment." Vinoba permitted authority to use the

²⁴²Prem Bhasin is one of those socialists who spent their entire life in the cause of the socialist movement and who were never chary of extending their unstinted but not unreasoned support to Jayaprakash.

²⁴³Prem Bhasin, "Twentyfive years of Bhoodan Movement, *Janata*, May Day number 1975, Vol XXX, No 14, Bombay 1975, p 33.

²⁴⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, *From Sarvodaya to Socialism*, op cit, p 45.

movement also "as a means of fighting communist violence and for shoring up "the system it (the government) was based on."²⁴⁵ In plain language, authority was at no point imbued with any more exalted idea than that of using the movement for the furtherance of its own scheme of politics. The pity was that Vinoba acquiesced in playing the role the power elite thought fit to assign him.

Should it be suggested that Jayaprakash had no knowledge of this it would amount to calling him naive or knavish. He was aware of this, to be sure. It was not with the aid of hindsight alone that he made this devastating observation in *Prison Diary*²⁴⁶: "The *gram swarajya* movement was not capable of bringing about a systematic political revolution.... The *gram swarajya* movement, beginning with *bhoodan*...and passing through *gramdan*...has taken 20 years to reach the ineffectual state in which it is found today... During the *bhoodan* movement, when hundreds of thousands of landlords donated their land, it might be claimed that a really widespread moral force...was created. Perhaps it was so. But it was shortlived, and later uncounted donors took back, or tried to take back, what they had given. That moral force was soon dissipated—though Vinobaji was still in the field—and when *gramdan* came along there was little of that force remaining."²⁴⁷

Jayaprakash spoke more harshly about Vinoba in the course of a series of taped interviews with me in May 1978. The issue I posed him was: "Gandhi knew the need of keeping watch on the government that swore by him. According to Louis Fischer, Gandhi had 'planned to build a new vehicle which would push the government and in an emergency carry the government's load. It would be in politics without seeking political power except as a last resort.' That is what the role of his Sarva Seva Sangh, the establishment of which Vinoba Bhavq engineered fol-

²⁴⁵Prem Bhasin, "Twentifive Years of Bhoodan," *Janata*, *op cit*, pp 34-35.

²⁴⁶Jayaprakash wrote *Prison Diary* during his detention after the imposition of emergency on 25 June 1975.

²⁴⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, *op cit*, p 32.

lowing Gandhi's death, was expected to be. For reasons best known to him, Vinoba assigned an entirely different role to the Sangh."

Replying, Jayaprakash said: "I hesitate to criticise a person like Vinoba Bhave. But I think the basic reasons for his failure were that he separated politics, even party politics, from the rest of his efforts to change society and that the methods he used were a basic departure from Gandhiji's. Also, I think that Vinoba has been a prisoner of his own words. He created a peculiar situation by saying that he had achieved his goal, and now his work in this field was finished and he would go to the moral and spiritual spheres of life.

"I think it was too early for him to say that. *Because he really had not achieved his goal; he had not created a force in society*²⁴⁸—the Sarva Seva Sangh was there but it was not entirely his creation. He tried to use it, but by insisting that the Sangh must not have anything to do with politics, particularly party politics, he in a sense made it ineffective as an instrument of social change, including political change. I do not know whether I am fair to Vinoba in saying this, but this is what I feel."²⁴⁹

Splitting the socialist movement, Jayaprakash had turned to Vinoba, who was said to be the very image of Gandhi. But it did not take Jayaprakash long to be convinced of the irrelevance of the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement, of the fact that Vinoba was a false prophet. Jayaprakash could not be faulted for this. At every critical point Vinoba made it clear he would do nothing that might place him on the wrong side of authority. When the most crucial test came on 25 June 1975, Vinoba, true to himself, stood by the government, unashamedly characterising the emergency *anushasan parva* (a course of discipline).

The implication of what Jayaprakash said was that

²⁴⁸Emphasis added.

²⁴⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "True Socialism Believes in the Good of All," *Sunday*, Calcutta, Vol 6, issue 15, 25, June 1978, p 21.

Vinoba had, as a matter of policy, divorced himself from Gandhian ideology, abandoning in the process the concept of *satyagraha*, nonviolent resistance to evil and all that went with it. Without disputing this, it could well be said that if Vinoba had been remiss in what ought to have been his duty so was Jayaprakash. Jayaprakash too had never since independence used the splendid Gandhian tool of *satyagraha*, notwithstanding the fact that there had been innumerable occasions when it could very justifiably have been used.

Jayaprakash's assessment of Vinoba and *bhoodan* may at this point be contrasted with his understanding of the Jana Sangh and its concept of politics for an insight into this complex personality. If the Jana Sangh, faithfuls are "fascists I too am a fascist," who could have declared this braggingly in early 1975? Particularly, when the Jana Sangh was known to make a fetish of its anti-secular-obscurantist-authoritarian political ideology. Who but a morbidly communalist Hindu, one would probably say. No, it was none other than Jayaprakash who could take credit for the statement. According to the 6 March 1975 issue *Motherland*, the Jana Sangh mouthpiece, Jayaprakash made the statement when addressing the 20th annual conference of the Jana Sangh held in New Delhi.

The good conduct certificate without blemish which Jayaprakash handed out to the Jana Sangh, the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), shocked his friends and puzzled his enemies. How could Jayaprakash go on record with that statement, people wondered? After all, he had apparently come to be recognised as a symbol of reason and rationality, of principled politics, of morality, absolute and total. Much as reasonable people fondly believed that it was no more than a slip of the tongue and that Jayaprakash would not allow any extraneous considerations to influence him to defend the Jana Sangh, he did not retract the statement, which communal forces treasured as the most impressive credentials they could ask for.

The question naturally arises: Why did he confer res-

pectability on the Jana Sangh—RSS combine? Did he do this in a fit of temper? Was he not aware of the hideous nature of the ideology this outfit had inscribed on its escutcheon? Let us take the last question first. A negative answer to it would almost amount to calling Jayaprakash a moron. For he knew much better than most Indians what the Jana Sangh—RSS fraternity stood for, the threat and the challenge it posed to society. And communal forces of every hue and shade in contemporary India could not find a more implacable enemy, except Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, than him.

To get the point one has only to run one's eyes over the not so distant past. In his presidential address to the Second National Convention Against Communalism on December 28-29, 1968 Jayaprakash said: "India being a country of many religions, almost every religious community has its own brand of communalism. They are all pernicious, but Hindu communalism is more pernicious than the others... Hindu communalism can easily masquerade as Indian nationalism and denounce all opposition to it as being anti-national...Some like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh might do it openly by identifying the Indian nation with *Hindu Rashtra*...When the Sangh was under a shadow after Gandhiji's murder there were many protestations about its being entirely a cultural organisation. But apparently emboldened by the timidity of the secular forces it has thrown its veil away and has emerged as the real power behind, and controller of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds which tie it so firmly to the RSS machine. Nor can RSS be treated as a cultural organisation so long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party."

He did not let the matter rest here. Referring to "RSS itself," he observed that "if it has the good of India at heart it should convert itself from a narrow-minded Hindu organisation to a broadbased Indian organisation and admit into ranks the young from all communities and train them...to be disciplined, loyal and united citizens of

India. They [RSS] would earn the gratitude of India if they did that, but if they persist in their present politics and happen to make headway they will most certainly kill the soul of *Hindu Dharma* and sap the foundation of the nation."

Jayaprakash was not oblivious of the potential for mischief of other facets of the problem of communalism. In the course of the same speech he said: "I have time only for one more religious communalism, that of Muslim communalism. Certain facts of Indian history and misinterpretations of Islam, coupled with reaction to Hindu communalism, have produced a type of Muslim communalism that is becoming a danger both to the Muslims themselves and to the country. There is one body that I would like to identify particularly as a source of such danger—I mean the Jamaat-e-Islami."²⁵⁰ At the same time, he wanted it to be clearly understood that minority communalism was not only a response to Hindu communalism but also would grow in volume "if *Hindu Rashtra* and not *Bharatiya Rashtra* becomes the goal of the predominant Hindu community."²⁵¹

Even as temptation of the politics of power induced the so-called radicals to hunt for areas of agreement with communal forces, Jayaprakash did not slacken his crusade against the Jana Sangh-RSS complex. Hamstrung as he was not by the exigencies of *real politik*, he did not allow the lure of the immediate gains to obfuscate the distant ideal. He needed no prompting to appreciate that the remorseless logic of the political philosophy of the Jana Sangh-RSS coaxial would necessarily keep it tied down to the narrow path, occasional detours apart, marked out by M S Golwalkar, who became *sarsanghchak* (supreme leader) of RSS in 1940 after the death of its founder K B Hedgewar. Golwalkar died in 1973.

²⁵⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "A Disease," *Nation Building in India* (ed) Brahmanand, date not mentioned, Navachetna Prakashan, Varanasi, pp 132-34.

²⁵¹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Concept of Nationhood," *National Convention on Unity and Democracy*, date not mentioned, Committee for National Convention, New Delhi, p 16.

Whatever might be his other faults, Golwalkar could never be accused of being less than brutally frank when it came to RSS objectives. As he put it in his book *we or Our National Defined*: "The non-Hindu peoples in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture...they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its agelong traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead... In a word, they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in this country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizens' rights."²⁵²

Gowalkar's misunderstanding of history convinced him that, as he stated in his book *Bunch of Thoughts*, "all those communities that are staying in this land yet are not true to its salt, have not imbibed its culture, do not lead the life which this land has been unfolding for so many centuries, do not believe in its philosophy, in its national heroes, and in all that this land has been standing for, are, to put it briefly, foreign to our national life. And the only real, abiding and glorious national life in this holy land of Bharat has been of the Hindu people."

This indeed has echoes of the thoughts of another man who strove hard to put human civilisation in reverse gear. In the pages of *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler harangues that "it is the Aryan who has furnished the great building stone and plans for the edifices of all human progress." And in *Bunch of Thoughts* one comes across Golwalkar tubthumping to sell his brand of *Herrenyolk* cult that "the origin of our people is unknown to scholars of history. In a way we are *anadi*, without a beginning, or we existed when there was no need of any name. We were the good, the enlightened people. We were the people who knew about the laws of nature, the laws of the spirit.

²⁵²Quoted in Trevor Drieberg and Sarala Jag Mohan, *op cit*, p 62.

We had brought into actual life almost everything that was beneficial to mankind. Then the rest of humanity were just bipeds and so no distinctive name was given to us. Sometimes in trying to distinguish our people from others we were called 'the enlightened — the *Aryas* — and the rest the *Mlechas*!'²⁵³ Golwalkar could be heard to say in 1939 that "the national pride of the German is the talk of the whole world. The Germans drove out of their country the Jews only in order to maintain their racial and cultural purity. Germany has also shown that it is very difficult for fundamentally different races to live together. This is a lesson which India could learn and profit by."²⁵⁴

With the passage of time there was an evident hardening of this pathological attitude of RSS to non-Hindus. No Indian who had not lost his reason could afford to ignore this. Small wonder that Jayaprakash felt perturbed. While elaborating his views on the genesis of communal conflict he said in an interview with a journalist in October 1969: "There are well-organized Hindu bodies like RSS — there may be several others — who are extreme and militant communalists, who believe in a Hindu nation, who think that Hindus alone are the sons of the soil and that Muslims are aggressors and enemies. Some of them may be leaders and members of the Jana Sangh ... The RSS organisation is like an iceberg, a part of it is visible, the greater part invisible. It is a secret or semi-secret organisation, certainly not a cultural organisation. I am sure there are other less known groups spreading the same kind of poison. This ceaseless propaganda is like stocking dry powder in the community, and when a match is struck there is an explosion."²⁵⁵

Between then and March 1975 and Jana Sangh-RSS brotherhood was not known to have gone through such an alchemic process as could have enabled it to listen to

²⁵³Quoted in Trevor Driberg *Four Faces of Subversion*, published by Trevor Driberg, 1975, pp 11-13.

²⁵⁴Quoted in Trevor Driberg and Sarala Jag Mohan, *op cit*; p 116.

²⁵⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "India-Haters Behind Communal Riots," *Nation Building etc*, *op cit*, p 187.

reason. That being so, how can one account for Jayaprakash's changed attitude towards the communal outfit which he had branded as the most harmful element in society? Two plausible explanations could be there. For one thing, Jayaprakash was in a hurry, considering the fast developing political crisis in the country. For another, Jayaprakash was almost persuaded that the alchemy of struggle would bring about a qualitative change in the ideas and attitudes of the political parties. One cannot however avoid drawing the conclusion that the compulsion of events prevailed upon him to put a premium on expediency. Circumstances alter cases and Jayaprakash, who had all along apparently insisted on sticking to the straight path of principled politics and whose major pre-occupation had been the question of ends and means, seemed to have caved in when he should have stood most firmly for his principles.

It is another matter that he did not take long to realize that he was out in his reckoning. Immediately after the March 1977 parliamentary election it became obvious that the period of sweet reasonableness was over. The succession of events confirmed that RSS had not changed a whit, that it was determined to play an obstructive role. And Jayaprakash woke up to the stark reality that his concept of total revolution would be reduced to a mockery if the Janata Party continued to associate itself with any variety of communalism.

Soon after his return from the US, where he had gone for medical treatment, Jayaprakash observed that RSS was a malignant growth in the body politic of the country. In an interview to *Samayika Varta*, a weekly, on 13 September 1977, he said that RSS had no justification to continue its separate existence "in the changed circumstances." Speaking in the same vein, he stated: "In the course of my contact with RSS leaders as well as cadres, I have noticed a change in their outlook. They no longer have a feeling of animosity towards other communities. But in their heart of hearts they still believe in the concept of *Hindu Rashtra*."

And he advised RSS to "disband itself and merge with the youth and cultural organisations of the Janata Party." If that was not possible, RSS should at least "open its doors to members of all communities, including Muslims and Christians, and make it possible for members of all castes and communities, including Harijans, Muslims and Christians, to hold the highest office in the organisation." He also suggested that RSS front organisations should join the Janata Party's front organisations. "If this is not done," Jayaprakash warned, "there will be great potential for discord and conflict in future."

He reminded RSS members that he had good hope that "they will give up the concept of *Hindu Rashtra* and adopt in its place that of Indian nationhood, which is a secular concept and embraces all communities living in India."²⁵⁶ His hopes however withered much before he died but not the mischief his alliance with the Jana Sangh had caused.

To return to the point. All his political experiments notwithstanding, Jayaprakash had acquired a chrisma that was second only to that of Prime Minister Nehru. That he could take certain things for granted, harbour a feeling of inviolability and that his words and deeds reflected an assurance that the exercise of the right to dissent and to protest would not invite the dreaded early morning knock on the door reflected in a way the relatively relaxed political climate that obtained in the country, thanks largely to Nehru. Jayaprakash did have a voice in almost every issue of national importance; he lodged a protest whenever he thought fit to do so; and both the opposition and the ruling Congress gave him a hearing. If the opposition did not deny his preeminence, Nehru (Jayaprakash and Nehru maintained communication with each other till Nehru died) was loath to ignore him. Jayaprakash had come to be looked upon as the tallest among the country's elder statesmen.

But this does not suggest that Jayaprakash was intent on living up to what was generally expected of him. What

was really hurting was his inability, deliberate or not, to take a total view of the realities on the ground. His stance on men and events often created the impression that there was a yawning gulf between him and objectivity. This was amply reflected in his attitude to two international issues in which India was involved in the early 1960s. One was India's military action to liberate the territory that had remained under Portuguese occupation for centuries. This came in for severe criticism by Jayaprakash.

In the name of nonviolence, international peace and moral-ethical values he condemned India's military action to recover this territory. According to him, this compromised India's declared policy of peaceful resolution of international problems. That his approach to the issue coincided with that of most NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) member-countries was nothing for surprise. What Walter Crocker, sometime Australia's diplomatic representative in India, said regarding the issue is interesting. He was of the opinion that "most foreign diplomats...had not expected...such an outburst of nationalism of the crude tribal sort" as most Indians had allegedly exhibited over the recovery of the Portuguese-held territory in India. Although "very few Indians at any level protested against it," Crocker was gratified that "J P Narayan was one of the leaders who did."²⁵⁷

Nehru was the target of Jayaprakash's biting criticism of India's policy towards Portugal's colonial possession in India. The irony of it was that Jayaprakash had in the past found fault with Nehru for his failure to recover the Portuguese-held territory in India. He also quoted Gandhi, who supported Lohia when he first took up the cause of Portugal's colonial possessions in India, to strengthen the point that Nehru had been remiss in his duty.

The other incident was China's aggression against India, otherwise called the India-China border dispute, and the resultant occupation of a sizable chunk of Indian territory.

²⁵⁷Walter Crocker, *Nehru: A Contemporary's Estimate*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1966, p 123.

In keeping with his newly acquired penchant for international pacifism Jayaprakash observed, referring to the Indian territory China had seized, that "China has not for once said that she is occupying other people's territories. Both India and China lay claims to the land. China says she has not committed aggression and from her point of view she may be right."

In the circumstances it was advisable, Jayaprakash said, that "at least we could make an effort as an earnest of our goodwill to find some impartial judges or arbitrators in whom both of us [India and China] have trust and refer this boundary issue to them."²⁵⁸ About two years later, as Crocker put it approvingly, Jayaprakash "suggested amongst other things that India should offer to lease Aksai Chin [already under Chinese occupation] to China."²⁵⁹

Referring to the India-China border issue in a speech at Madras on 29 June 1964, Jayaprakash said: "It is not old maps and treaties that will decide the issue. What is needed is a political settlement, a compromise. India must recognise China's interests. China needs Akasi Chin... China likewise must understand and appreciate India's case."²⁶⁰

Whether or not one agrees with Jayaprakash's prescription one would respect his view he had been frank about it, if he really believed that China was not guilty of perfidy. Available evidence however would indicate that there was considerable discrepancy between Jayaprakash's public posture and personal belief. His public utterances were at variance with his private understanding of China and its international conduct. This would be clear from his letter of 25 January 1963 to Nehru: "A Chinese friend of mine, Mr Chang Kuo-sin...is here for a few days. He... has been connected with me through the Afro-Asian Coun-

²⁵⁸ Jayaprakash Narayan, "India in the World Community," *Three Basic Problems of Free India*, op cit, pp 46-47.

²⁵⁹ Crocker, op cit, p 159

²⁶⁰ Jayaprakash Narayan, "The Role of Sarvodaya," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, op cit, p 299

cil,²⁶¹ which we established primarily to fight for Tibet. Chang has come here on behalf of the Formosa Government and President Chiang Kai-shek.

"I think it is important...that you meet him and hear him patiently and sympathetically... His is a straightforward proposition. Both India and Taiwan are up against the same enemy. They need not become formal allies and India may not give up her nonalignment. But yet he and Taiwan feel that they can help India in many vital ways. You may spurn this help (I hope you won't), but you should meet Chang...give his submission serious thought. The challenge of China is a long-term one and it has little to do with our borders. China will not be satisfied with anything else than to see the whole of Asia turn to Chinese communism. India is the most powerful obstacle in her path and she cannot rest unless the obstacle is removed. We have to fight against that danger in our own way, without giving up our basic principles and values. But Chang and Taipeh are not even expecting, much less demanding, it."²⁶²

It would not be beside the point to say that Nehru's reply to the letter, dated 25 January 1963, despite all the public demonstration of Jayaprakash's misconceived pacifism and self-righteousness, was a candid reaffirmation of his cordial and affectionate relations with Jayaprakash. Without making the least effort to be diplomatic or avoid meeting Chang Kuo-sin, although he knew that this might cause him both personal and public embarrassment, Nehru said among other things: "You refer to a Chinese friend of yours Mr Chang Kuo-sin. I shall gladly see him if you so wish... I am afraid I am rather heavily occupied for the next few days. He can see me at 3.30 p.m. on the

²⁶¹ Jayaprakash was chairman of the Afro-Asian Council, established in 1959 at a conference he had convened. The Afro-Asian Council's major preoccupation was to campaign for the "liberation" of Tibet, which China had occupied in 1950

²⁶² See Appendix L for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

31st January in my office in the External Affairs Ministry."²⁶³

Even as Jayaprakash was engaged in confidential business with Nehru, a queer kind of politicking was afoot at another level. J B Kripalani, notionally a Praja Socialist leader at that time, took the initiative to convene a meeting of some of the country's most vocal and otherwise esteemed senior citizens, albeit of widely divergent political views, including the first President of India, Rajendra Prasad, first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Army, K M Cariappa, first Indian Governor-General C R Jaganmohan Reddy, M R Masani²⁶⁴ and Jayaprakash.

As Kripalani explained,²⁶⁵ the object of the proposed conclave was to review the disquieting developments consequent upon the Chinese aggression and government's reaction to them. Apparently Kripalani's letter had nothing in it that could be taken exception to. It would in fact have been less than natural if men like Kripalani had not been concerned about the disturbing aftermath of Chinese aggression. But then this exercise was not as innocent as the letter might suggest.

The idea behind it was to orchestrate a move to put Prime Minister Nehru in the dock for his alleged mismanagement of the nation's affairs and the resultant failure to defend national interests. The proposed get-together was part of the post-Chinese aggression manoeuvres to

²⁶³ See Appendix H for copy of Jawaharlal Nehru's letter to Jayaprakash Narayan. Also see Appendix M for photocopy of Jayaprakash Narayan's reply, dated 27 January 1963, to Jawaharlal Nehru's letter mentioned above. The originals of both letters are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

²⁶⁴ A longtime friend of Jayaprakash Narayan, M R Masani had no patience with radical politics or nonalignment. See Appendix N for copy of his letter of 4 February 1963, which explains itself, to Jayaprakash Narayan. The original of the letter is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

²⁶⁵ See Appendix O for copy of J B Kripalani's letter along with the list of invitees; to Jayaprakash Narayan; the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

cut down Nehru to size, if possible remove him from office. Granted that this did not necessarily go always against the rules of the game of parliamentary democracy. Still it would be difficult to explain Jayaprakash's association with it, particularly considering his proclaimed field of interest and activity and intimate relations with Nehru.

Elsewhere however a plausible explanation of Jayaprakash's posture might be had. It should be remembered that he was very much in the thick of active politics on a scale no other opposition leader could even conceive. In spite of his repeated emphasis on his withdrawal from partisan politics, the evils of the party system, and parliamentary democracy, and the unique promise of *bhoodan-sarvodaya*, he could appreciate that his role in politics would remain marginal unless he could speak from a position of strength. He knew he would never be able to acquire this until, first, he had a tool he could use at will and, secondly, Congress could be thoroughly softened up.

Jayaprakash's problem was the image he had projected of himself—a stern moralist-puritan who, like Gandhi, had no use for power personally but was determined to reconstruct society through clean and honourable methods. He had to preserve that image and yet go about his scheme of politics. In a situation like this he could not always spare himself the agony of a double standard. Therefore Nehru had to be hit when the Chinese aggression left him in a vulnerable position. If this could not be reconciled with Jayaprakash's supplication to Nehru at the same time it could not be helped. Or so would Jayaprakash appear to suggest.

Of a piece with this were his interminable efforts to ensure that PSP, which continued to enjoy his trust and patronage, did not disintegrate because of its disoriented politics and internal contradictions. The third general election in 1962 had left PSP in a state of near-rout. It had got bogged down in expedient politics through compromise, temporising and summitry. The objective of building a "socialistic pattern of society," which Congress accepted at its Avadi session, also contributed to the process of PSP's

dispersal.

Disillusioned by PSP's politics of drift on the one hand and encouraged on the other by the Avadi resolution of Congress a good number of members, including Chandra Shekhar, left the party to join Congress. So did Asoka Mehta, though not formally yet, by accepting a seat on the official Indian delegation to the United Nations and deputy chairmanship of the Planning Commission. This precipitated a crisis in PSP, threatening it with disintegration.

Jayaprakash, who had unequivocally denounced the party system and parliamentary democracy, thought nothing of intervening in PSP's crisis. If Asoka Mehta felt free to seek his advice,²⁶⁶ Jayaprakash also for his own set of reasons did not disoblige him. The fact is Jayaprakash could not act otherwise, for his primary consideration was the survival of PSP. How deeply he was involved in PSP politics would be evident from the letter its chairman, S M Joshi, wrote to Jayaprakash on 28 September 1963 and his letter of 8 February 1964, to Asoka Mehta.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ See Appendix P for copy of Asoka Mehta's letter of 12 September 1963 to Jayaprakash Narayan, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

²⁶⁷ See Appendix Q for copy of S M Joshi's letter to Jayaprakash Narayan and Jayaprakash Narayan's letter to Asoka Mehta, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

CHAPTER V

Search for an alternative Power Centre

For a while it seemed that Jayaprakash's attitude to Congress, particularly after Lal Bahadur Shastri took over as prime minister after Nehru's death in 1964, had acquired a certain rigidity that was rather unlike him. His criticism of the ruling party became louder and more harsh. One reason for this was presumably his not quite comfortable relations with Shastri. Between them there was little of the warmth, cordiality and tolerance which marked Nehru's relations with Jayaprakash. Unlike Nehru, Shastri was chary of granting him the status of an elder statesman who evinced most of the characteristics of an unlimited personality.

Something appeared to have changed somewhere with the return of a Nehru, that is Indira Gandhi, to the seat of power after the death of Shastri in January 1966. This development also marked the beginning of the most turbulent decade of India's post-independence history. This decade was destined to see the beginning of a process of churning which would eventually reveal all the strengths and weaknesses of the national polity as well as those of Jayaprakash.

Relations between Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi deserve more than just contextual reference. Much of what happened in the years between Indira Gandhi's assuming the reins of government in 1966 and the declaration of emergency in 1975 could be traced to Jayaprakash's relations with her at a given point of time. Available evidence would indicate that Jayaprakash tried hard to establish a working relationship with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The image he projected in the initial stage was that of an understanding elder statesman who could rise above

partisan consideration when the enlightened interests of the nation were concerned. That this did not go unreciprocated is a matter of record. Yet before the decade was over the country's two most powerful and charismatic personalities were on a collision course.

The consequences of this were disastrous for the country. The confrontation between Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi further embittered the people and added to their misery, not to speak of emasculating the democratic fabric of the polity. Any dispassionate assessment of this convulsive event is not possible because we are much too near it. The wound it inflicted has yet to heal, the memory of it lingers, and credibility is far from restored.

Sometime after Indira Gandhi became prime minister, Jayaprakash spoke his mind in the course of a convocation address to Delhi University on 23 December 1966. Referring to the growing tempo of student unrest in different parts of the country, he expressed views which ran counter to the opposition parties' thinking on student power, the students role in politics and the widespread agitation, often violent, that marked the academic scene in those days.

Jayaprakash's message to the student community, which was in a rebellious mood, would seem to suggest that he had suddenly changed tack. As he put it, "if such events [the reference was to the student unrest] go on recurring more or less in the same pattern as hitherto, they would destroy not only every edifice of education and with it the student community but also destroy eventually the country itself."

What he said on the role of political parties in student affairs could not possibly have found many takers. He conceded that "college and university students have every right to participate in politics, and political parties may have their student branches or sections." But political parties, Jayaprakash emphasised, "should not interfere with purely student affairs...the spheres of students' unions and of student branches of political parties must be kept distinct and separate."

It was not unlikely, Jayaprakash felt, that "one of the factors behind violence is the planned action of political parties which hope to gain from spreading chaos and anarchy." This of course did not negate the fact, as he understood it, that "more often it is the expression of desperation caused by the failure of authority to respond to peaceful ways of representation and protest. Too often there has been evidence that authority moves only when violence is out on the streets."

It was deplorable, Jayaprakash observed, that the student community had been given "no ideal which can lift them up from the mud of parochialism and provincialism and which can provide them with a channel for self-expression and adventure in living... The students experience no involvement in the gigantic tasks of national reconstruction." But so far as he could see there was a silver lining to the cloud and "happily the times seem to be propitious again."

He felt that "the steadily deteriorating economic, social, political and moral condition of the country with the fatality of bandhs [contrast this with Jayaprakash's repeated calls for bandhs of ever lengthening duration in 1974-75] and senseless acts of violence have created a healthy disgust with politics and compelled people in different walks of life to turn their thoughts to constructive channels and to ask what they themselves could do to help."

He advised the student community not to let things go by default. Students would do well to take thought for such "nation-building" activities as would "fill the emptiness of their lives and give them an ideal to work and fight for." To do this however, Jayaprakash said, it was "not necessary for a single student to leave his school or college." For "the task is to draw students into the mainstream of national life, which is not politics but reconstruction."²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Jayaprakash Narayan, "Student Unrest," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 3; *op cit*, pp 41, 46-47, 49-51.

Was this the harangue of a rebel? Would any ruler, let alone others, take exception to this? For that matter, what Jayaprakash told the country's students and youth a couple of years later could easily pass for undiluted wisdom. Addressing Magadh University convocation on 19 January 1969, Jayaprakash said: "Take again the so-called youth revolt. While our young men strike a number of revolutionary postures, such as when they launch a strike, rend the sky with revolutionary slogans, beat up bus conductors and policemen, burn cars and lorries, and commit other acts of similar nature, they remain conservative at heart when it comes to more serious things, such as caste feeling and behaviour, taking of dowry in marriage and, if they come from landowning families, in their attitude towards tenants and labourers."

Such a derisive and at the same time realistic assessment of the student community no opposition leader nor any ruling party elite could make and yet get away with it. But it was a different story when Jayaprakash did it. Both the opposition and the ruling party apparently agreed not to question his right to say or do things which might buy any other person a ticket to damnation. Jayaprakash made it clear that he had no patience with what was then being done in the name of a militant student movement in the country: "Several observers have written about the so-called student revolt or unrest... Whatever the cause of the revolt there can be no doubt that it is doing grave injury to students and also to the nation. In the much advanced and affluent West, the damage done can be tolerated, but in a poor and backward country like ours the paralysis and degradation of educational institutions cannot but push the country further backward."

Jayaprakash's "appeal to the more farseeig and courageous students" was that they should "seek other ways of self-expression and self-development for improving the conditions of their education."²⁶⁹ These were sage words

²⁶⁹ Jayaprakash Narayan, "Education System in India," *ibid*, pp 53-54, 57

which obviously could not be expected to enthuse the student community then apparently in a bellicose mood almost all over the country. His views on the state of student affairs berating the widely prevalent notion of student power and the student role in politics could hardly be improved upon even by the most conservation segment of the establishment.

Parenthetically, how different was his message to the student community some five years later. In the Bihar movement in 1974 he told an interviewer on 26 August 1974 that "the students...are the soldiers of this movement and will have to be in the forefront; and it will be a setback if they went back to their classes. So they should boycott classes. Even examinations should be boycotted."²⁷⁰ A few months later, on 5 October 1974, he said that he was "fully" prepared to "share [the] responsibility" with the students who along with the opposition parties "have taken a grave responsibility upon themselves by deciding to stop the running of railway trains in Bihar from October 3 to 5."

What was more, Jayaprakash emphasised, "the aims of this movement can never be realised except by mass participation." It was therefore incumbent upon "the activists of the movement [to] go to the masses and mobilise them to squat on the tracks...and if this is done in shifts throughout the day and night, all running of trains can be brought to a standstill, blocking all the lines and throwing the entire railway system in the State out of gear."²⁷¹

This almost harked back to his appeal to the students to participate in the 1942 freedom struggle reminding them that they stood to "really gain and not to lose if you were to leave college for a year and throw yourself into the whirlpool of national life."²⁷² The only difference between these two diametrically opposed positions was

²⁷⁰ *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 26 August 1974

²⁷¹ Jayaprakash Narayan, "Stop the Trains," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 4, *op cit*; pp 106-107

²⁷² Jayaprakash Narayan, "Blood Toil and Tears," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 3, *ibid*, p 27

that in 1942 the country, then a British colony, was engaged in a "do or die" freedom struggle and Jayaprakash was a Marxist revolutionary who felt no qualms about using violence if necessary. But in 1974 India was a democratic republic and Jayaprakash was committed to establish a Gandhian society.

The appeal to students in the 1970s for a repeat performance of what their elders had done in 1942 was indeed an incredible exercise. It was all right for him to stir the students to revolt. But could he justifiably insist on almost an identical prescription in 1974? It seemed Jayaprakash had missed the perspective and the categories of his thinking had apparently got badly mixed up. However serious the political situation might have been in the mid-1970s it did not admit of being equated with the situation during the most demanding and crucial phase of the nation's struggle for freedom. Jayaprakash apparently refused to acknowledge that it was clearly as much a question of proportion, balance and logic as that of understanding and comprehension of the absolutely opposite nature of challenges society faced in 1942 and 1974 respectively. More about it later.

About the time Jayaprakash was counselling students to exercise moderation and take to constructive activities he made efforts to strike up a dialogue with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. His long letter of 23 June 1966, marked "strictly confidential," to Indira Gandhi, who had become prime minister only a few months earlier, would make interesting reading for more than one reason. Written on his own initiative the eight-page letter was mainly devoted to acquainting the Prime Minister with his assessment of the Kashmir problem as well as his ideas on what might help to see it in its right perspective.

A perusal of the letter would show that Jayaprakash took up the cudgels for Sheikh Abdullah, former Chief Minister of Kashmir, who was then in detention, requesting Prime Minister Gandhi for his release. The letter would also speak well for his concern about the country, government's credibility and of course about a very complex and

sensitive issue, that is Kashmir, which had been worrying the nation almost since independence.

Another aspect of the letter was Jayaprakash's apparent keenness to explain himself and his multifarious activities, for instance, his observation on Aksai Chin (already mentioned), and his role in the Nagaland peace mission. The tone of the letter might suggest Jayaprakash's eagerness to prove that he was not a spent force, an elder statesman at a loose end who had outlived his utility. Regretting other's comments on his activities, he said: "Nandaji [Gulzari Lal Nanda, then central cabinet member in charge of home affairs] seems to have told Shri R K Patil that Jayaprakash is 'completely out of touch with public sentiment' on the question of Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah. I suspect that more of your colleagues are of that view. I therefore want to offer a few comments to clear the air."

And then the letter took a rather surprising turn. Emphatically he said that the motivated comments on his activities, circulated by "mostly crypto-communists and Hindu nationalists of all hues ... did not alienate Jayaprakash from public sentiment." What he further added to elaborate this would hardly conform to the image of the tallest and the most fearless among the Gandhians that he otherwise projected: "I make bold to say that except for you personally, there is no one in your government who is as constantly and widely in touch with the people as I."

Continuing he stated: "Almost daily I address public meetings, and invariably my experience has been that I am heard in pindrop silence, and afterwards people come to me to assure me that they had been completely misled, and if that was what I meant they were all for it. The only two of my meetings that were disturbed were in Delhi at the time of my visit to West Pakistan and the trouble makers were RSS (Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh) boys whose minds were closed. I am not saying that everyone who listens is persuaded, but I am saying that the views I propound with frankness and sincerity are far from

being out of touch with public sentiment."

Then the line Jayaprakash threw in to complete this part of the letter was not only unwanted but also in bad taste: "May I say here, without appearing to flatter you, that by your recent bold decisions you have shown that you are attempting to give the people courageous leadership?"²⁷³ This might have tickled Indira Gandhi's vanity but it did not embellish Jayaprakash's image.

The traffic in communication was neither a one-way nor a one-shot affair. The letters exchanged between Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi would appear to indicate that they had a certain feeling of warmth and affection for each other. The Prime Minister's reply, dated 2 August 1966, to Jayaprakash's letter of 17 July 1966 would suggest that, despite his past criticism, at times harsh, of Nehru and Congress he was not looked upon as an adversary of the regime. In the given context it was surely not a question of routine for Indira Gandhi to accede to Jayaprakash's request for a meeting with Sheikh Abdullah, then in detention.

Replying to Jayaprakash's letter, Indira Gandhi said: "I have no objection to your meeting Sheikh Sahib while you are in Kodaikanal. The Home Ministry are issuing necessary instructions in the matter. I am sure you will agree that it would not be desirable for your talks to find their way into the press or otherwise become public. Any public disclosure at this stage would not be helpful."

Jayaprakash did not feel at all inhibited to make approaches to her. For instance, in his letter to her, on 2 September 1966, he said: "I understand that you are coming to Bihar to see Vinobaji ... I am writing this to make two requests. If time permits, we would like you to address a public meeting at Pusa Road when you visit Vinoba. Bhai (Jawaharlal Nehru) always did that whenever he

²⁷³ See Appendix R for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter of 23 June 1966 to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

visited Vinoba at his camps."

The other request was also for a visit to a medical science research centre with which Jayaprakash was associated and of which the Bihar Chief Minister was chairman. In Jayaprakash's words, "it is our desire that you be good enough to pay a visit to the institute also." And who could overlook the personal touch, the concern for her health that the letter conveyed: "Let me add that while I have made the above requests, I would not like you to consider them at all, should they put undue strain on you. I mean this seriously, because your health is more important than anything else; so please do not hesitate to say no."²⁷⁴

Maybe Jayaprakash's efforts were to establish rapport with the regime, hoping that he might be able to persuade it to cooperate with him in his various social activities. It is not inconceivable that his assumption was that Indira Gandhi, not being a seasoned politician like the old guard that controlled the Congress organisation, might not be averse to getting his cooperation.

In a general way, this might be of considerable assistance to him in his campaign for electoral reforms, restructuring of the economy and against corruption. He might also have been encouraged to think that Indira Gandhi might not like to disappoint him, remembering his relations with Nehru and his wife Prabhavati's very cordial and affectionate ties with her mother Kamala Nehru.

On the other hand, Indira Gandhi's calculations might have been that Jayaprakash's services could be utilised when the occasion arose, considering his non-party status and commitment to public issues. It may not be farfetched to say that Jayaprakash was readily allowed to meet Sheikh Abdullah, then in detention, because she thought

²⁷⁴ See Appendix S for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan-Indira Gandhi correspondence of 2 August, 2 September and 13 October 1966, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

he might be of some help in her search for a solution to the festering Kashmir problem.

Although Jayaprakash maintained his dialogue with the Prime Minister he started thinking aloud in terms of the politics of consensus leading to a non-party national government as the only sensible response to the challenge of nation-building. The outcome of the fourth general election in February 1967 seemed to have made him at once happy and worried. He was happy because as a result of the opposition's electoral success in some states the Congress "monolith was broken, never to be same again." Another reason for his contentment was that "for believers in democracy, the fourth general election was at once a vindication and reassertion of their faith ... Above all, the general election has reassured the Indian people not only about their country's capacity for survival but also about its inner vitality and collective wisdom."²⁷⁵

To locate the cause for Jayaprakash's worry it would be necessary to recollect the political scene before the fourth general election. The three most important persons on the political horizon at that time were Prime Minister Gandhi, Lohia and Jayaprakash with their respective understanding of the political situation, philosophies and charismas. The opposition's electoral success in a few states was largely the result of the work Lohia had done. Lohia wanted to build up his party, then called the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP),²⁷⁶ through mass movements, including mass struggles.

Uncompromisingly opposed to Congress, Lohia could never be persuaded of the irrelevance of the party sys-

²⁷⁵ On the basis of the statement Jayaprakash Narayan issued to the press on 13 March 1967, signed copy, dated 11 March 1967, of which Jayaprakash had given me.

²⁷⁶ In spite of acute differences regarding ideology, objective and methods, PSP and SP merged to form the Samyukta Socialist Party in 1965 and that substantially on Lohia's terms. This did not please Jayaprakash. PSP broke away from SSP the same year, one of the major reasons for which was Lohia's equation of "all-inclusive non-Congressism."

tem. Nor did he ever despair of the possibility of the emergence of rationally organised, party-based opposition politics on the basis of a workable radical socioeconomic programme that could provide a viable alternative to Congress. His eagerness for building up people's power was matched by his emphasis on harnessing it to the party.

But the two general elections after the formation of the Socialist Party did not even remotely suggest that the foundation of the Congress monolith had much weakened. This plus his failure twice to get elected to parliament (he was finally elected in a 1963 by-election) ruffled Lohia not a little. His subsequent talks and actions bore signs of impatience, suggesting he was in a hurry.

He seemed to have reconciled himself to the proposition that the Socialist Party would not be able to go it alone, that the situation demanded a certain amount of tactical manoeuvring. If Lohia's policy of "all inclusive non-Congressism," which was formally adopted at the Socialist Party's Calcutta conference in December 1963, reflected the compulsions of Indian politics, it also indicated his willingness to sup with the devil, of course not without a long spoon, so that Congress might be dislodged from power.

The importance of this shift in Lohia's policy, with which socialist leaders like George Fernandes heartily disagreed, could easily be understood if it is examined in terms of his almost desperate bid to provide an alternative national focus to Congress. Without this, so ran Lohia's argument, it would be impossible to break the Congress monopoly of power. Unless that could be done there was no chance of the opposition acquiring the credibility that it had graduated from the state of being merely notional, that it could, given popular sanction, replace Congress both at the national and the regional levels.

The fourth general election would bear out that this had paid dividends. But Lohia did not rest on his oars. Nor did he refrain from chastising his own men, particularly those whom he had enabled to enter the corridors of power in some states, for the slightest deviation from the difficult

path he had marked out. For Indian socialism still had miles to go before it could usher in the promised millennium, Lohia reasoned.

Indira Gandhi did not turn out to be the kind of political innocent that the aging and conservative Congress leaders, who had manoeuvred her for their choice of prime minister on the death of Shastri, thought she was. Much to their shock they soon found out that she could not be manipulated to do their bidding.

Not only that, she meant to be *primus inter pares*. She was very power-conscious and determined to exert a firm grip on every lever of power. She made every effort to consolidate her position in the party, projecting herself as the only political leader who would deliver the goods.

In the process she would stick at nothing to insinuate that the opposition parties, be they rightist, leftist or centrist, were the stumbling-block in the way of her implementing the good policies she was intent on. Indira Gandhi's plus points were no fewer than her minus points. What with her appeal to populism, grasp of strategy and tactics and fine sense of timing, she could get her own way as often as not. She split the Congress Party vertically, gave a tough fight to the senior leaders who had the party organisation under their thumb so long and managed to make her segment of Congress stand on its own legs.

The daring with which she faced a crop of perplexing problems, such as growing opposition within Congress, electoral setback and the resultant increase in the strength of the opposition parties, the police strike in Delhi, the Shiv Sena revolt in Maharashtra, secessionist politics in Andhra and a sickly economy, did not go unnoticed by the people. Although her party was in a minority in parliament after the 1969 Congress split, she kept the show going.

In all this Indira Gandhi could count on the support of the opposition parties as well as of a good many unattached politicians who were in the limelight. If as a matter of policy the Communist Party of India (CPI), as distinct from the Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPIM), ex-

tended to her, particularly after the Congress split in 1969, its support, certain other opposition parties, including a host of so-called left intellectuals, vied with each other to be on her right side. Also, in the initial stage, Jayaprakash was in a cooperative mood.

According to Jayaprakash, who was then committed to various odd causes, his scheme of things did not exclude cooperation with the government, if that was possible. There was another factor which influenced his attitude towards Indira Gandhi. As Chandra Shekhar said in a long typed interview on 2 August 1980: "In my opinion, Jayaprakash always considered Mrs Gandhi the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru or as the daughter of his elder brother."²⁷⁷ His difference with Nehru notwithstanding, Jayaprakash regarded him in this light. At this point Jayaprakash's role was akin to that of a self-appointed adviser to the nation on all matters but whose advice was rarely acted upon. The opposition, even PSP, did not take him seriously and the government was not really interested in him, other, than selectively using his services when it was in its interests to do so.

As has been earlier noticed, Jayaprakash felt satisfaction at the outcome of the fourth general election. His message to the opposition parties would in a way vouch for this. But this was only part of the story. To get an idea of the other part we might recollect that the opposition's success at the polls was possible largely because of Lohia's spadework from 1963.

In an effort to create a national alternative to Congress, Lohia had pushed on with his line of all-embracing non-Congressism, encouraging the politics of united front to prevent splitting the opposition votes. This success, though partial in creating an alternative to Congress at the state-level, could not conceivably have pleased Jayaprakash

²⁷⁷ Author—Chandra Shekhar taped interview, 2 August 1980. The tape of the interview and its transcript signed by Chandra Shekhar are with the author. Although reference to this interview will be made more than once subsequently, there will be no further mention of these details.

overmuch.

This was presumably an important factor in some of his political moves in this period. He had by now unmistakably returned to active politics. In spite of being gratified at the opposition's electoral success, Jayaprakash continued to cultivate the regime, particularly Indira Gandhi. This was apparently done with a view to locating non-partisan issues and areas which merited cooperation between the ruling party and the opposition at both the national and regional levels. This was an aspect of his concept of consensus politics.

The extent of his identification with the regime may easily be comprehended from his unqualified support to the official candidate for election to the office of president to succeed President S Radhakrishnan, who was due to retire in May 1967. The ruling Congress' efforts to get the opposition parties to agree on a consensus candidate having failed, it nominated Zakir Husain, the retiring Vice-President, for the presidency and V V Giri, a longtime trade union leader, for the office of Vice-President.

The opposition parties on the other hand selected K Subba Rao, who was due to retire as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in July, for the presidency. Although Subba Rao²⁷⁸ resigned his position after nomination, his decision to contest the presidential election drew adverse comments from a cross-section of the people, including Jayaprakash. That a sitting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court should enter the arena of election politics was considered detrimental conduct, morally, ethically and otherwise. But this had little effect on the opposition parties.

This issue was of the utmost importance to Gandhi, placed as she was in a rather difficult situation. Congress was no longer a cohesive force, schisms and cleavages hav-

²⁷⁸Known for his conservative views, Chief Justice K Subba Rao sided with the majority opinion in the Goloknath decision upholding that Parliament had no right to curtail or invalidate any of the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution. The issue involved in the Goloknath case was the right to private property.

ing had done their job. The decline in the party's superiority in numbers in Parliament and various state legislatures made the problem more complicated. What with her not quite amicable relations with Congress president K Kamraj and the conservative party legislators' uncertain attitude, she doubted whether she could depend on the strength of Congress alone to win the election. But she had to get Husain elected because she was in no position to risk being saddled with a president who might not see eye to eye with her on important matters. The question of secularism was also involved, and she "made it a personal prestige issue to see that Dr Husain was elected."²⁷⁹

The least expected happened at another level. Jayaprakash, who refused to entertain the idea broached by a number of non-communist opposition parties, including PSP, that he be a candidate for the office of president, threw himself into the breach. Apparently forgetting all about his public stand against the party system and his concept of partyless democracy, *lokshakti* and *lokniti*, he mounted a vigorous campaign for Husain, emphasising that his election to the presidency would strengthen, among other things, the forces of secularism. He issued strong statements flaying Subba Rao for his decision to contest. This, thought Jayaprakash, was an act of indiscretion, if not worse. He besought his friends in PSP to desert Subba Rao in favour of Husain; he also approached his other friends with identical requests.

Rather harshly turning down Jayaprakash's plea for support to Husain, S N Dwivedy, PSP member of Parliament and leader of the party's parliamentary group, said in his letter of 24 April 1967 that he ought to know better than to do this. In Dwivedy's own words: "I have a feeling that your [Jayaprakash's] approach to this question has not been very objective from the very beginning." He charged that Jayaprakash had in his "anxiety...issued statements which are not based on facts." Indeed, said Dwivedy, "we did not expect this from you. The question

²⁷⁹R P Rao, *The Congress Splits*; *op cit*, p 51.

of secularism has also been brought [in] in order to support his [Husain's] candidature, which is most unfortunate."

- Reminding Jayaprakash that it was "not proper to bring personal considerations into this matter," Dwivedy remarked that the issue was "purely political and public." He felt Jayaprakash might not "on calmer consideration... take such an aggressive stand as you have taken on this issue." He regretted that "on this matter" PSP was unable to "see eye to eye" with Jayaprakash, stressing that "we do not like the manner in which you have jumped into the fray."²⁸⁰

Two things were clear from Jayaprakash's involvement in the presidential election. First, his exertions on behalf of Husain did not enhance Jayaprakash's credibility. The argument that the issue had been decided on merits did not go far enough to acquit him of the charge of involvement in partisan politics. Secondly, Jayaprakash's intercession for Husain helped Indira Gandhi in both her struggle inside Congress against a section of senior leaders and efforts at image building outside.

What could have been Jayaprakash's calculations that induced him to swerve from his declared course? It may be that his initial satisfaction at the changed political scenario after the fourth general election subsequently gave place to a feeling of uneasiness. He perhaps felt disturbed by the emerging political developments. The truth might have begun to dawn on him that the opposition parties' electoral success, particularly in the Hindi-speaking heartland of the country, could be explained largely in terms of the political line that Lohia had initiated. Indeed Lohia had engineered the process of wearing down Congress. This presumably could not be comforting to Jayaprakash.

²⁸⁰See Appendix T for copy of S N Dwivedy's letter of 27 April 1967 to Jayaprakash Narayan as also of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter to a Nagaland Legislative Assembly member, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

In the circumstances, he might have argued that Husain's defeat, more appropriately Prime Minister Gandhi's likely failure to get her nominee to occupy the presidential seat, would bring in its train a whole lot of unpredictable developments, apart from reinforcing the opposition. This might eventually facilitate the emergence of an alternative power centre, its character and composition being essentially determined by Lohia. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain his sudden decision to make a moral issue of the presidential election, forgetting everything he had been preaching since his withdrawal from active politics, and exert all his strength to defeat the opposition candidate. This was a trying experience for the opposition parties, particularly PSP. That Jayaprakash should, despite his criticism of Congress and his expression of happiness over the opposition's relative success in the fourth general election, make common cause with the Prime Minister was yet another instance of his confused thinking.

What baffled all, both the ruling Congress and the opposition parties, was Jayaprakash's brief for an all-party government of national consensus at the centre even as he held a brief for Husain. As has been earlier mentioned, some time before the fourth general election he started talking about the desirability of consensus politics in the given context. He firmly believed, only to regret it a few years later, that this could help the country to tide over the period of stress it was passing through.

A note of urgency was added to it as the outcome of the general election apparently injected an element of uncertainty into the political scene. Jayaprakash repeated his suggestion that a national coalition government be formed at the centre to tackle the fast deteriorating socioeconomic situation in the country. He cautioned the people against being unreceptive to his advice. Failure to act upon his suggestion, Jayaprakash warned, might catch India in a cleft stick.

As he put it in the course of a statement on 5 May 1967, just a day before Husain was elected: "If there are no constitutional or political alternative to ensure stability at

the centre and the situation develops in such a way that the government is toppled, often it occurs to me that there is only one organised force which can fill the vacuum—the Army. I am not suggesting that the Army should do it. I will regret such a situation being created. But if political parties do not have enough sense to prevent such a situation from arising, I would not blame the Army from stepping in.”²⁸¹ Men like Kripalani and C D Deshmukh (former Finance Minister in Nehru’s cabinet) joined forces with him.

This no doubt indicated his rather superficial understanding of the situation, his lack of clear thinking. It was not therefore surprising that his statement would cause a commotion, but that did not deter him from pursuing his line of mutual accommodation with the Prime Minister. His statement on the official language bill, which fell short of the Hindi zealots’ expectations, would speak for this.

If his letter, dated 10 December 1967, to Prime Minister Gandhi meant anything, he appreciated her stand on the issue: “I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of another statement of mine—this time on the official language bill. This statement has stirred up quite a storm in Patna, but all due [to] mischievous propaganda of some parties and Hindi organisations. I have been very happy to find the firmness with which you have withstood the opposition’s onslaught.”²⁸² Also, he kept President Husain posted with his views in the matter.

President Husain’s reply, dated 11 December 1967, to Jayaprakash’s letter of 5 December expressed such lofty sentiments towards him as might excite the envy of even the most committed supporter of the regime: “Thank you for your letter of the 5th December and the enclosed statement. I have read the statement with great care and I do

²⁸¹Quoted in V B Kulkarni, *The Indian Triumvirate: A Political Biography of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru*; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1969, p 553

²⁸²See Appendix U for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan’s letter of 10 December 1967 to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

hope it will awaken people to their responsibility. Gandhiji had once called [Rabindranath] Tagore 'The Sentinal.' I feel that is true of you today."²⁸³ And Indira Gandhi's letter of 14 Decembtr 1967 was a grateful acknowledgement of Jayaprakash's service to the nation: 'I should like to express my appreciation of your public statement condemning recourse to violence and unconstitutional methods of agitation over the language issue. It was most welcome and timely... I am sorry that after the publication of your statement some misguided elements should have organised an unseemly demonstration against you. Such insensate behaviour is indefensible and will hardly promote the cause of Hindi."²⁸⁴

After Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister, Jayaprakash dropped no hint anywhere which might suggest that he was an implacable enemy either of Congress or of the parliamentary system. Rather, he took it upon himself to lavish praise on India's experiment with parliamentary democracy. It was baffling indeed to get the measure of this man. He categorically denounced party-based politics and parliamentary system not long before, and yet he did not think it contradictory to say, as he did in 1968, that "India's parliamentary democracy, despite its many faults, has proved to be a much greater success than was expected."

Not only that, "this success becomes the more striking when one takes into account the vast population of the country, its mass illiteracy, its bewildering diversities of languages, religions, castes and regional histories. Consider also the fact that it has been able to withstand the shock of Nehru's death and that of Shastri's soon after, as well as the shock of two wars with China and Pakistan, and two

²⁸³See Appendix V for copy of President Zakir Husain's letter of 11 December 1967 to Jayaprakash Narayan; the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

²⁸⁴See Appendix W for copy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's letter of 14 December 1967 to Jayaprakash Narayan; the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

severe droughts on top of rising prices, mass poverty and unemployment, and unconscionable economic disparities and social disabilities." He also vouched for the fact that "the Indian political system does provide a genuine and credible outlet for mass disaffection and desire for change.

"The reality and extent of the political and civic freedoms allowed by the Indian Constitution can be judged from the fact that a recently formed party of Indian Maoists, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), is able openly to denounce parliamentary methods and preach armed insurrection. The demand for banning this party has been successfully resisted so far by the left parties (including the socialists and communists) on the ground that political opposition and vanquishment was a far better remedy than legal suppression."

Lest this should be interpreted as being in conformity with his idea of democracy, Jayaprakash added a line to it. The point he emphasised was that "while in the above respects Indian democracy is fairly satisfactory, examined from the Gandhian stand-point of power to the people, dispersal of power, participation, direct democracy, communitarian representation, etc, it is highly unsatisfactory."²⁸⁵ Whether or not one agreed with this idealistic stance it was quite in tune with what was supposed to have motivated Jayaprakash to withdraw formally not only from the socialist movement but also from every form of partisan politics.

But to suggest that he consistently pursued the ideal he had set himself would be far from true. Empirically observable facts would rather point to a different picture. Oblivious of the need for logical association of thoughts, ideas and actions Jayaprakash fleetly moved from one universe to another, now tearing at prevalent concepts and theories, now substituting his pet notions for objectivity. And these contradictions were very much reflected in his attitude towards the regime. The realities of life and the

²⁸⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "Gandhi and the Politics of Decentralisation," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol. 1, *op cit*, pp 223-24.

ideals he preached had little in common with one another, but that did not discourage him from continuing his one-man campaign for the politics of consensus and of selective cooperation with the powers that be.

Consensus politics was the felt need of the hour because, Jayaprakash emphasised in an article in 1968, "experience shows that existing political institutions and processes are tending increasingly to promote disunity rather than unity, disruption rather than consolidation, neglect of duty rather than devoted work, partisanship and parochialism rather than patriotism.

"Competition for power between political parties is considered to be the essence of the kind of democracy that exists in the world today. But in the well-established democracies the number of parties is small, there is stability and discipline in the parties, standards of political conduct are high, public opinion is powerful and effective. In this country, the picture in all these respects is most depressing; there are too many parties, party discipline is weak, causing splits and factionalism, political morality is low."

It was because of these reasons that, Jayaprakash believed, "such things as corruption and defection, etc. are rampant." Also, "public opinion happens to be weak." In the circumstances, it would be futile to expect "politics of competition... to tackle the urgent and grave problems facing the nation." In fact, competitive politics, that is "power politics," could be said to have been "aggravating and complicating many of the national problems and, in some cases, obstructing or slowing down their solution." Expressing concern over "the situation on the student front in eastern and northern India," Jayaprakash observed that it "has been greatly aggravated by partisan politics."

Politics of competition, according to Jayaprakash, had a very adverse impact on the economy. It was beyond dispute, he said, that "the country's progress, particularly in the economic field, depends critically upon everyone performing an honest day's work. But political parties

are mainly responsible for inculcating in the employees the suicidal mentality of more and more income for less and less work." By way of substantiating his charge he referred to what "the education minister of a non-Congress government told me once." The minister confided to Jayaprakash that "there was hardly any primary school functioning in his state because the teachers were not attending to their duties."

There was no difference between this and the "situation" that obtained "in the fiscal policies of state governments," Jayaprakash stressed. He said that "the search for cheap popularity" prompts state governments to "reduce their sources of revenue and ... to add to their expenditure. Many state governments have abolished land revenue ... and raised the salaries of their employees ... The resulting imbalance in their budget is then sought to be made up from loans or subventions from the Centre."

This was bad, but worse still was the fact that "when the Centre attempts to enforce a measure of financial discipline, political capital is sought to be made out of the popular game of (this is particularly true of the non-Congress governments) centre-baiting." Such a state of affairs could not but make the people lose faith in the politics of competition, Jayaprakash stated. It should therefore surprise none to be told that the people "would be happy" if the political parties "were to come together to work for the common good."

The point was, as Jayaprakash saw it, should "the political parties ... agree, that would be politics of consensus." He was of the opinion that, in the given context, the "only alternative" to consensus politics was "that of dictatorship, which does not deserve serious discussion." That being so, it "occurred" to Jayaprakash and "some" of his friends "to find out if the parties would be prepared if not to substitute at least to supplement the present competition with consensus."²⁸⁶

The assessment of the situation was not unwelcome to Prime Minister Gandhi. One might as well say that much of Jayaprakash's critical references to the opposition par-

ties reflected her views, irrespective of whether he had meant it or not. But the essential component of the remedy he suggested—the ruling party's subscription to consensus politics — was anathema to her. As for the opposition parties, they rejected both the assessment and the prescribed remedy as etchings in subjectivity.

That of course did not prove that Jayaprakash's argument was entirely without substance. The ruling party and the opposition, each for reasons of its own, might take no heed of Jayaprakash's appeal, but that did not automatically invalidate his assessment of the socio-political situation in the country. Or for that matter the case for consensus politics in certain specific areas of socio-economic engineering to enable the country to resolve some of its basic problems.

For his part however Jayaprakash kept on pursuing his idea of consensus politics. Nor did this go unreciprocated. Reference might in this connection be made to the letter K K Dass, Director of the National Academy of Administration, wrote to him on 11 October, 1968.

Presumably, if Jayaprakash was in the bad books of the government Dass would not have requested him to make a visit, with all expenses paid, to the Academy, the most prestigious institution run by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, to train the country's top civil servants.²⁸⁷ This was not an isolated instance of cordial relations between Jayaprakash and the regime. His correspondence, in July 1969, with Prime Minister Gandhi and Home Minister Y B Chavan regarding Bihar politics might also be mentioned. When one got below the surface, one saw that a relatively enduring understanding existed between Jayaprakash and the government at that point.

The fact that Bihar had a non-Congress government did not inhibit Jayaprakash from suggesting certain dras-

²⁸⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "Politics of Consensus," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *op cit*, pp 205-207.

²⁸⁷See Appendix X for copy of K K Dass's letter of 11 October 1968 to Jayaprakash Narayan, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

tic measures to cleanse Bihar's political-administrative setup of dross and dregs. He advised that the state be subjected to a not too short spell of President's rule, the Legislative Assembly dissolved, and the incumbent Governor and Chief Secretary replaced.

It was amazing that of all people Jayaprakash should say what he did in his letter of 3 July 1969 to Chavan: "When I had met you on the 30th June to discuss, among other things, the possibility of President's rule in Bihar, I had hardly imagined that the Paswan Government [non-Congress] would fall the very next day. In this connexion I issued a press statement yesterday of which a copy is enclosed. I should like to draw your attention to that part of my statement in which I have emphasised the need of competent and effective leadership during President's rule."

What he said afterwards would suggest that Jayaprakash also could operate on mutually exclusive levels simultaneously: "In a public statement I could not be any more explicit, but Shri Kanungo [Bihar Governor Nityananda Kanungo] and the present Chief Secretary must be replaced." And Chavan did not forget to keep him informed.²⁸⁸

The first major sign of a crack in the understanding between Jayaprakash and the government appeared when Indira Gandhi resolved to add a touch of radicalism to her economic policy. Placed as she was, her choice of alternatives was rather limited. She was under pressure from both the Congress conservatives and their allies outside to keep to the beaten track. They had in fact been working overtime to put her on the mat. On the other hand the radicals in Congress, otherwise known as Young Turks, headed by Chandra Shekhar insisted on a left orientation of the party's policy and programme.

²⁸⁸See Appendix Y for copies of correspondence, dated 3, 4 and 29 July 1969 between Jayaprakash Narayan and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Home Minister Y B Chavan, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; New Delhi.

The infighting in Congress had almost reached the point of no return when Indira Gandhi resolved to take the first step towards projecting a relatively radical image of the party. In July 1969 she decided to nationalise 14 premier banks. Three days before this was formally announced she had Finance Minister Morarji Desai, who stoutly opposed nationalisation, relieved of his portfolio. Desai subsequently resigned from the Cabinet.

That all manner of vested interests would be up in arms against bank nationalisation was not at all surprising. They had every reason to do so. As Carras so graphically put it: "One economist reported that in 1967 as much as 57 percent of the total credit allocated by the 14 banks nationalised in 1969 had been allocated to big industrialists; another 19.4 percent had gone to trade and commerce; and 10.2 percent had been advanced as personal loans. Small-scale industry had received 6.6 percent of the funds loaned by these banks. The smallest proportion — 0.4 percent — had gone to agriculture."²⁸⁹ This is enough to explain why nationalisation should cut the industrialists, big business houses and their patrons among the politicians to the quick.

Included among those who opposed it were S. Nijalingappa, president of Congress, Jana Sangh, the obscurantist facade of RSS, and Minoo Masani, president of the right-wing Swatantra Party. These diehard conservative forces found in Jayaprakash a kindred spirit. For, according to him, bank nationalisation was "wrong and unwarranted."²⁹⁰ No wonder that by implication his attitude towards bank nationalisation identified him with past regarding forces.

In her battle against the conservative forces, particularly within Congress, Indira Gandhi could hardly afford to depend on halfway measures. The efforts she made, including her support in the election of V V Giri, against

²⁸⁹Carras, *op cit*; pp 141-42.

²⁹⁰Quoted in R P Rao, *The Congress Splits*; Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1971, p 107.

the official Congress candidate Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, to the presidency after the death of President Husain, to consolidate her position eventually led to splitting Congress in two. The split in Congress was the upshot of a clash of both policies and personalities. If some of Indira Gandhi's policies and most of her style of functioning were resented by the old guard, three very important members of which (Atulya Ghose, Kamaraj Nadar and S K Patil) constituted what came to be called "the Syndicate," she had no patience with them either. Although it was none of his concern Jayaprakash made it known that the fragmentation of Congress was not to his liking.

The split in Congress created considerable difficulties for Indira Gandhi. Other things apart, her segment of the party, which came to be known as Congress (I), lost its absolute majority in Parliament. This pitchforked her into an awkward situation. The parliamentary support she needed to maintain her position obliged her to search for it wherever it might be obtained from. It may be recalled that most of the left parties, including the two communist parties, joined forces with her in electing Giri President. The left parties had flocked round her "in the belief that they were furthering the cause by joining hands with the Congress Left of which she was the leader."

It would be quite relevant to recall that except CPI and to some extent PSP other left parties steadily moved away from the ruling Congress after Giri's election to the presidency. CPI remained steadfast to its policy of support to Indira Gandhi because it had a different perspective. It is not just a conjecture that "when Congress split CPI thought it was time to put into practice its theory of uniting with the progressives in Congress whose leader was Mrs Gandhi. CPI(M), which was in no way less enthusiastic than CPI in supporting Mr Giri, gradually cooled towards the Prime Minister's Congress when her preference for CPI became clear ... Of all parties CPI is closest to Congress ... Uniting with the progressives in Congress remain ... a non-negotiable aspect of CPI's

policy."²⁹¹

From 1969 till the seventh parliamentary election in 1977 CPI did not waver in its supports to the ruling Congress. Each had its own reasons to stand by the other. If the Prime Minister used the CPI connection to add a flavour of radicalism to her regime, CPI needed the ruling Congress to carry it nearer the seat of power. This was what Jayaprakash thought. He looked upon CPI as a "conspiracy" aimed at supplanting the country's democratic polity by a totalitarian system. In view of this he could never overcome his objection to Prime Minister Gandhi's accommodating policy towards CPI, nor her relatively close relations with the Soviet Union.

The initial dislike grew into resentment when the ruling Congress chose CPI in preference to PSP for an electoral alliance in the 1971 midterm election to Parliament and the 1972 election to the state assemblies. Jayaprakash believed that Indira Gandhi had a liking for authoritarianism all along, and anyway she ceased to be a democrat after 1971. The emphasis on 1971 would perhaps explain itself if the whole thing is viewed in the context of the ruling Congress' electoral understanding with CPI in 1971 and 1972, and the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship in 1971.

Jayaprakash, admittedly, went on record with the statement : "It is in our national interest to have very close and friendly relations with the Soviet Union. That is why I wholeheartedly welcomed the Indo-Soviet treaty in 1971." At the same time, he added a rider: "I am totally against importing or imposing the Soviet system in India."²⁹²

And he was convinced that the Indo-Soviet treaty would be used for the wrong purpose. His apprehension was that the 1971 treaty might ultimately turn out to be the thin end of the wedge. At any rate he would not rule

²⁹¹Sankar Ghosh, "Left Politics in India," *Sunday Hindustan Standard*, 21 October 1973, p 5-7.

²⁹²Jayaprakash Narayan, "Important Changes," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 4, op cit, p 97.

out the possibility that Indira Gandhi and the Soviet Union might use one another in a way that could in the long run land India in the Soviet orbit. What *Everyman's* editorially said in its issue of 1 December 1974 would indicate this: "The Communist Party of India has bared its plan ... The party's National Council adopted a resolution last week which calls for the formation of coalition governments of the Congress Party and left democratic forces both at the Centre and in the states.

"The plot is a variant of the scheme Moscow very successfully implemented in Eastern Europe after the Second World War to put its men in power ... Evidently the European plot cannot be repeated in India. Firstly, CPI does not have the Red Army at its back. Secondly, the party is not yet politically that strong to force the Congress Party to form coalition governments ... But it has given clear indications of what it is aiming at.

"The aim is to strike an electoral alliance across the nation with the Congress Party for the next elections to Parliament and the state legislative assemblies ... CPI will strive to raise its share of the constituencies if its plan for an electoral alliance succeeds. Thereby it hopes to gain more seats in Parliament and the state assemblies. A situation then will be created when the Congress Party will find it difficult to resist CPI's demand for coalition governments ... Congress president Dev Kant Barooah has already indicated his party has plans to go to the polls in an alliance with CPI ... If the elections go the way as it [CPI] hopes they should, it would press for power sharing ... CPI would ... ask for portfolios which would give it some real authority. Some of the fellow-travellers are manning a few already. It would ask, for more, so they could push Mrs Gandhi to a corner ... Will Mrs Gandhi fall for it? ... She would not mind sharing power with CPI if that would keep her in power ... It looks as though she is now going to be a willing heifer at the altar of the Kremlin."²⁹³

²⁹³*Everyman's* 1 December 1974.

More incriminating is what Jayaprakash said in an entry, dated 21 September 1975, in *Prison Diary*. Referring to the emergency proclaimed on 25 June 1975 he observed: "The question is where was this [emergency] planned. Not in the Congress Working Committee" nor "in the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet" nor for that matter "in the so-called 'Inner Cabinet.' ... it was planned in a secret cell of the PM's confidants, comprising almost certainly pro-Soviet members, one or more of whom must be in close touch and regular communication with some India cell in the Soviet Embassy. I am sure the secret will be out one day, but this is as far my guess goes."²⁹⁴

One reason for Jayaprakash's dissatisfaction with Prime Minister Gandhi was his apprehension that she was taking the country dangerously close to the Soviet Union. It was generally believed that Russia was actuated by ulterior motives and that there was method in its more than ordinarily accommodating attitude to India. As a columnist observed in a write-up in *Everyman's*: "In Moscow's calculations Mrs Gandhi must be courted. Therefore, CPI must fall in [sic] line.... If Mrs Gandhi is able to consolidate her hold on her own strength... she would not care much for Russia.... On the other hand, if she is driven to [sic] a corner when she has to depend on CPI she would be amenable to Soviet influences."²⁹⁵

Jayaprakash's obsession with the ruling party's Russian link would however be hard to justify. The Indo-Soviet compact, it is true, was not just an ordinary diplomatic formality. Relations between the two countries were much too close not to attract notice. The links were many and their impact at times on India's foreign policy could also be felt. Nevertheless, future events would confirm that Jayaprakash's fears were unfounded and

²⁹⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, op cit, p 62.

²⁹⁵Shambuk, "The Role of CPI. Always Playing Second Fiddle to Moscow," *Everyman's*, 16 November 1975, p 3.

India's ties with the Soviet Union did not turn out a halter. Whatever might be her other shortcomings, Indira Gandhi, was second to none when it came to patriotism. Nor did she ever mean to ditch the country's nonaligned policy or allow Russia to call the tune, occasional imbalances in her policy notwithstanding.

This also could be explained if we agreed not to take a jaundiced view of the international scene at that time. Every other aspect of it apart, a glance at the deepening US-Pakistan understanding should go a long way towards getting Indo-Soviet relations in perspective. The US was filling up Pakistan's armoury in a manner that no Indian government worth its name could afford to ignore. If seen from this angle it would not be too complex to appreciate India's stance on the Soviet Union. Jayaprakash somehow seemed to have missed this point.

But the charge—some at least—which Jayaprakash levelled against CPI were not entirely baseless. On more than one count CPI and its allies in the ruling Congress could be rightfully held responsible for having done their best to frustrate the efforts to initiate a meaningful dialogue between Jayaprakash and the Prime Minister. If a dialogue had been successful, the situation might have been saved. But then CPI's mischief was part of its political line which sought to, besides, other things countervail Jayaprakash's efforts to wean a section of Congressmen from their party.

It may be noted that Jayaprakash on his part banked on certain influential Congressmen to work for his cause from within. As he observed in *Prison Diary*, "whatever [might be] Mrs Gandhi's personal inclination, it would not be possible for her to become a dictator ... the Congress Party ... would not let that happen."²⁹⁶ When that proved a fond hope he called upon some senior Congressmen to defect to his side. Chandra Shekhar might once again be relied upon to throw light on the matter.

Replying to my inquiry about the attitude of certain

²⁹⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, op cit; p 13.

Congress leaders, particularly Y B Chavan and Jagjivan Ram, towards Jayaprakash, he observed: "Chavan was one person who never spoke against JP nor in favour of JP in most of the discussions where I was present.

"Jagjivan Ram has a tremendous capacity to speak different languages at different places. JP all along his life was under the impression that Jagjivan Ram was always in favour of his movement. At least this impression Jagjivan Ram used to give before those who were admirers of Jayaprakash Narayan. But whenever it came up for discussion within the Congress Party he always opposed JP's movement and JP's stand in a most vehement manner.

"I will give you just one illustration. In one of the meetings of the Working Committee—I don't remember the date—they brought a resolution condemning the movement and they wanted to condemn Jayaprakash Narayan by name. I opposed that resolution. I said 'You condemn the movement, I have nothing to say, though I don't agree with this line of thinking. But if you say something against JP I shall have to say publicly that I disassociate myself from this resolution'."

"There was a heated debate and many stalwarts at that time, including Rajni Patel, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, D P Dhar especially these three or four persons, were pleading for that line, but I did not agree. The debate went on for quite a long time.

"Again, people are surprised and sometimes people don't believe that Mrs Gandhi came forward and said, 'If Chandra Shekharji feels so strongly, why should we not change the resolution and redraft it?' And perhaps D P Dhar and Siddharthashankar Ray, or two or three of them, were asked to redraft the resolution, and it came up for discussion in the afternoon. That was a very good resolution without mentioning JP and all that.

"Before bringing the resolution before the Working Committee, perhaps D P Dhar showed it to me and I told him 'I am fully in agreement with the resolution, that is, the language of the resolution. However, I don't agree

with the spirit of the resolution, but if you want to pass the resolution as a political one you can do so.' I don't remember the exact text of the resolution, but there was some thing like some sarvodaya leaders are supporting this movement which has got the potentiality of becoming violent.

"As usual, when the resolution came up for approval in the Working Committee Mrs Gandhi passed it on to Jagjivan Ram to look into. Jagjivan Ram went through the resolution and the one amendment he suggested was 'Why have you written sarvodaya leaders, they are not sarvodaya leaders, (meaning Jayaprakash Narayan), he was not a sarvodaya leader, you write so-called sarvodaya leaders.' And the resolution was amended—you can verify this from the records of AICC. This was what Jagjivan Ram was

You will be surprised, Bhola, that only a day or two after this JP met me and he was giving all the time the impression that Jagjivan Ram was inclined towards his movement. I think sometime at that point JP made that famous statement that the time had now come for men like Chavan and Jagjivan Ram to come out and support his movement.

"I laughed at this, but I did not think it proper to tell JP that this was the attitude of Jagjivan Ram in the Working Committee. So long as JP was alive I never narrated this story to him because I did not think it proper that I should tell him about what happened in the Working Committee.

"To be fair to Chavan, he never opposed him. Chavan always said that 'JP is a great person. I salute him for his contribution to the nation and as a hero of 1942. We are the product of 1942 and JP is our hero.' That was what he told me, told others and he always took that line. But he never defended or supported JP's line in any case. So the role of Chavan, in my opinion, was much more consistent and much more honourable than that of Jagjivan Ram.

"So I was not much disillusioned when Jagjivan Ram

supported the emergency, but I was a sad person when I saw that Chavan kept quiet after the declaration of emergency. I want to tell you one thing. At one stage, you remember, there was some talk between Mrs Gandhi and Jayaprakashji. In that also Jagjivan Ram played the key role when he said that there was no question of dissolution of the Bihar government and, finally, the talks broke down between JP and Jagjivan Ram JP told me 'Chandra Shekhar, you are doing your best but I think it is not possible to do anything in Congress. You should come out with an open stand.'²⁹⁷

Although it was quite clear by now that Jayaprakash's concept of consensus politics had no taker, he continued to maintain his link with the regime. This he did perhaps more under compulsion than by choice. It was so because he could neither persuade the opposition to accept his line nor turn the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement away from Vinoba and transform it into a mass sociopolitical movement. He was in a state of despair, and a despairing man could hardly be expected to take an impartial view of men and affairs. His convocation address to Banaras Hindu University on 18 February 1970 would in a way confirm this.

Addressing the convocation, Jayaprakash said that "the last decade has been unsatisfactory. . . . In this very decade political uncertainties and disintegration spread, the power monopoly of Congress was broken, its own house was divided, administrative chaos became widespread, political morality touched a new low, crossing the floor became a contagion, political indiscipline increased . . . legislators were drawn into a market for sale and purchase and devaluation of ideologies continued." It was a gloomy situation, and likely to become still more gloomy, he emphasised.

Having diagnosed the malaise, Jayaprakash asked: "What shall we do?" His answer was that the people "should understand and do [their] duty as citizens of a

²⁹⁷ Author—Chandra Shekhar taped interview, 2 August 1980.

democratic country. Political parties, legislators and ministers are becoming autocrats ... the community of scholars in the last few years has shirked its responsibility in this respect. Some teachers and students have participated in party politics and those having a taste for it will continue to do so. But this process does not help the formation of a nonpartisan public opinion which could make an impact on all political parties."

In view of this it was necessary not only to "appreciate the important difference between party view and general public opinion" but also "explain this difference to others." In order to do this, "societies for the defence of democracy may be set up in every city."

Castigating the political parties, he remarked that they "have been turned into arenas for the infight of certain political games," and there was little the people could do to "restructure all political parties along distinctive ideological moulds." Nevertheless, he asserted, "we do have the strength to compel them to go straight, through voters' education societies and defence of democracy."²⁹⁶

Few would question the list of ailments with which, according to Jayaprakash, the body politic was afflicted. In fact, everybody who was somebody in society had been wailing over what obviously was a sorrowful state of affairs for as long as one might care to remember. It was all right for Jayaprakash to have given his powerful voice to the feelings of the people. But he knew, and so did others, that diagnosing the ailment would not cure it. Something else was necessary, and what could that be, other than firm positive action?

This naturally would give rise to the question: What was Jayaprakash doing while the forces of evil were spreading their tentacles in all directions. He arraigned everybody — politicians, legislators, intellectuals, administrators ruling as well as opposition parties and all. But he did not apparently think that he had any more positive

²⁹⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "Banaras Hindu University Convocation Address," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *op cit*, pp 59-62.

role to play at this juncture than to sermonise and point his finger at one and all reprovngly. Nor did he consider the situation grave enough to admit the practice of his philosophy of extra-constitutional nonviolent struggle.

On the contrary, his advice to the people was that they should take to establishing outfits for the defence of democracy. But why this emphasis on defence of democracy and not on combating directly the problems which, according to Jayaprakash, were corroding society from within? Was democracy really in danger in 1970? Even if it is assumed that this was so, the proposed defence of democracy societies were no remedy for it. For that matter, he ought to have known better than to imagine that the future of democracy would be secure only if the people agreed to implement his scheme.

Jayaprakash surely was not unaware that democracy is a total concept. A certain socioeconomic climate is necessary for it to strike root and flourish. He must have known that extremes of poverty and wealth were not best calculated to ensure effective functioning of democratic institutions. Or that existence of political freedom alone would not guarantee a meaningful working of the democratic process.

For democracy to survive, let alone become a living reality, Jayaprakash knew it too well, it needs more than one political party and, most important, an economic system that would not tolerate a segment of society to thrive on the misery of the rest. Did not Jayaprakash know that if anything endangered the chance of survival of Indian democracy it was the exploitative socioeconomic system that forced almost two-thirds of the country's population to live a subhuman life.

This was not the only aspect of the enigma that Jayaprakash was. In the course of the Banaras Hindu University convocation address he made it a point to remind all concerned that "in 1967, the Lok Sabha by a resolution directed the central government to appoint an all-party committee to find a cure for the disease of floor crossing. This committee was constituted under the chairmanship

of Yashwantrao Chavan and submitted its report early last year. As a member of that committee and as a citizen, I demand that the Government of India must bring a bill in the next session of Parliament to implement the recommendations embodied in that report."

He also suggested amending the People's Representation Act to check "immoral practices in elections,"²⁹⁹ and curb the increasing use of money power which affected the conduct of elections. The argument was very rational and few could find fault with it. Jayaprakash included these among the major issues in his 1974-75 struggle.

Precious little was done to resolve these corrosive problems. But the point is, what happened to his plea for reform of the People's Representation Act, legal provision to stop floor crossing and impose a ceiling on election expenditure when the Janata Party came into power? The Janata leaders were beholden to Jayaprakash, but what prevented him from holding them to their promise of electoral reforms?

If the rhetoric is omitted Jayaprakash's convocation address conveyed only one message—the entire polity had become rotten. But this did not inhibit him from continuing to the regime. To make the point clear reference might be made to a letter Govind Narain, Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, wrote to him on 7 April 1972. Since the Official Secrets Act will not allow reproduction of the letter, marked "strictly secret and confidential,"³⁰⁰ it would suffice to say that it dealt with some of the most sensitive aspects of the question of surrender of the Chambal Valley decoits. No government would communicate this to an outsider who did not enjoy its confidence.

Union Home Minister K C Pant's letter to him on the same issue might also be cited. Pant presumably knew

²⁹⁹*Ibid*; pp 64-65.

³⁰⁰The original of Govind Narain's letter, DO No 4773/HS/72 dated 7 April 1972; to Jayaprakash Narayan is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

what he was talking about when he wrote to Jayaprakash: "I am glad that the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and the Deputy Home Minister of Uttar Pradesh as well as you could give me the benefit of your suggestions regarding the manner in which we should proceed with the acceptance of surrender proposed to be made by a large number of dacoits of the Chambal Valley at your instance."³⁰¹

Again, what is one to make of Jayaprakash's letter, dated 5 July 1972, to Indira Gandhi: "Congratulations on the success of the Simla talks. I hope Bhutto would have the good sense to recognise Bangladesh soon.... It appears from the papers that a very understanding relationship has been established between you and Mr Bhutto. This is far more important than any agreement written down on paper." Then, adding a warm personal touch, he said: "I am afraid you are working too hard and I hope you will take care of your health. I am glad you decided to stay behind in Simla for a couple of days for rest."³⁰² And Jayaprakash was of the view, as he stated in *Prison Diary*, that Indira Gandhi had clearly manifested anti-democratic tendencies from 1971, if not earlier.

Mention also be made of the letter, marked "strictly personal and confidential," T N Kaul, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, wrote to Jayaprakash on 10 July 1972. Kaul's communication dwelt on sensitive issues concerning India-Pakistan relations and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then President of Pakistan, Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah.³⁰³

³⁰¹The original of K C Pant's letter No 17/3/72—GPA 1 dated 10 April 1972; to Jayaprakash Narayan is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

³⁰²See Appendix Z for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter of 5 July 1972 to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

³⁰³The original of T N Kaul's letter; marked "strictly personal and confidential", No 102-IR/FS/r of 10 July 1972, is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

It may also be recollected that Jayaprakash unreservedly cooperated with Mrs Gandhi in respect of the 1970-71 struggle for the liberation of what was then East Pakistan. And in the 1971 parliamentary election, which the ruling Congress won hands down largely on the basis of its two-word election slogan of "garibi hatao" (banish poverty), steamrolling the so-called "grand alliance" of the non-communist opposition parties, Jayaprakash did nothing that could upset Indira Gandhi's scheme of politics.

Between the letters Jayaprakash wrote to the Prime Minister on 5 July and 16 March 1973 there was a distance of some nine months. Yet within this short span he seemed to have taken U turn. And he took to a course only to find himself in collision with the regime barely two years later. Before coming to this we might have a quick look at the political scenario at that time. The starting point could be the elections to the state legislatures in March 1972.

The elections, which took place after the successful culmination of Prime Minister Gandhi's policy on the struggle for liberation in Bangladesh, was a repeat performance of the 1971 parliamentary election. The opposition parties were routed with the exception of the Communist Party of India, which gained a few seats in some legislatures on the strength of its electoral understanding with the ruling Congress. To achieve this electoral success, the opposition parties complained, the ruling Congress had to rig the elections.

The political scene looked quite challenging, what with increasingly difficult economic conditions and the politics of expediency and temporisation the opposition parties indulged in. They lacked discipline in thought and action. With their ranks in disarray and disoriented the opposition parties seemed to have substituted bellicose slogans and the periodic ritual of *bundh* (total stoppage of work) for ideological commitment and sustained work at the grassroots. Irrespective of their ideological labels, they shared the belief that the ruling party, and particularly

its leader Indira Gandhi, was responsible for all that had gone wrong with the country.

Analysing the elections to the state assemblies, the Jana Sangh noted with grave concern "the ruling party's determined attempts to smother democracy, annihilate opposition parties by unscrupulous use of governmental machinery and money power, and to reduce the elections to a farce." Not only that "even the unabashed exploitation of the Bangladesh issue," the Jana Sangh observed, "could not have produced for Congress the victory it has won [in the 1972 assembly elections], were it not for the fact that ... governmental machinery has been misused and money power used on a totally unprecedented scale."

The Jana Sangh was of the opinion that "over the years elections have been becoming more and more corrupt." It therefore appealed to "all democrats, irrespective of party affiliation," to think things over and "devise ways and means to make the present electoral apparatus reflect the people's will."³⁰⁴

Other levelled almost identical charges, plus something more, against the ruling party. Madhu Dandavate, general secretary of the Socialist Party, an offshoot of the original PSP, said Indira Gandhi's "style of functioning is utterly alien to parliamentary democracy."³⁰⁵ More, the Socialist Party characterised the elections in Bihar, Kashmir and West Bengal as "rape of the democratic process."³⁰⁶

The accusation that the ruling Congress had practised widespread rigging of the 1972 elections furnished a point of contact between the opposition parties and Jayaprakash. The non-communist opposition was in search of a rallying point and it thought he could play this role ideally. In fact, at the request of the opposition parties, Jayaprakash agreed in principle to head a non-official

³⁰⁴*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 21 March 1972

³⁰⁵*Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 21 September 1972

³⁰⁶Quoted in Bhola Chatterji, "Will the Socialist Party Rise Above Expediency" *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 27 March 1972, p 6

commission of inquiry into charges of rigging and other electoral irregularities on condition that the ruling party should also be associated with this operation.

The idea was however given up as the ruling Congress declined to have anything to do with the proposal. Its refusal to cooperate was not calculated to please Jayaprakash. Certain other developments also ruffled him. Meanwhile, Indira Gandhi announced the government's decision to take over the wholesale trade in foodgrains. To the surprise of not a few, Jayaprakash strongly objected to this and he saw to it that his opposition was publicised.

Many factors had rudely shaken the economy in the early 1970s. Consequent on India's liberal aid to the Bangladesh liberation struggle, including food and shelter to about 10 million refugees from Bangladesh, successive droughts and the resultant crop failures, the economy had gone almost out of gear. A new dimension was added to this when Prime Minister Gandhi decided, in the wake of the summer and autumn food riots, to take over the wholesale trade in grain in early 1973. This enraged a great many people who had for many years been making a pile, legally as well as illegally, out of manipulating grain.

The trading community was enraged, and so were brokers, market operators and, above all, powerful agricultural interests, not excluding a sizable section of politicians with rural connexions. Those in the last category of people, though they belonged to different political parties, including the ruling Congress, were united in opposition to this measure.

That vested interests would range themselves against government policy was not unexpected. But the fact that Jayaprakash should also hold a brief for these people was indeed amazing. It could not be said that he was ignorant of the rapacity of the men who controlled trade in grain and their utterly conscienceless attitude towards this vital aspect of the nation's economic life. Nor was it unknown to him that these traders could hold

society to ransom as they had done many times in the past. Yet he supported the plea of these people for repealing the decision to take over the wholesale grain trade.

In a press statement on 13 March 1973, he said the government should "reconsider [its] policy," reminding it of the "very cogant arguments" advanced by the "conference of the Federation of All India Grain Dealers Association." He argued that the government's refusal to rescind "the ill-considered policy" would only increase the suffering of "the common people", and "the worst sufferers will be the poor". Ridiculing "those who prattle all the time of monopoly and socialism" he emphasised that "the takeover of the foodgrains trade has nothing to do either with monopoly or socialism. Indeed, this policy is sure to discredit socialism in the eyes not of the rich but of the masses, and it will hurt the ruling party itself." He therefore urged government to "give up this foolhardy adventure." He also wrote to the Prime Minister suggesting that the foodgrains policy be annulled.³⁰⁷

Jayaprakash had a point when he said that mere imposition of government control on the grain trade, or any productive activity, in a liberal-democratic state like India could not be equated with socialism. But then the government's policy did not suggest that its objective was to facilitate the country's journey towards socialism. Nor did it claim the takeover of wholesale trade in foodgrains to be the ultimate solution of the problem.

It was a patent fact, which Jayaprakash also could not deny, that hoarders, profiteers and blackmarket operators had long been engaged in plundering the people, making nonsense of whatever policy government might have control this.

As the whole country, not excluding Jayaprakash, knew

³⁰⁷See Appendix A1 for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan's press statement of 13 March 1973 as well as that of his letter of 16 March 1973 to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

they could get away with this because they took particular care to grease the palms of, a select number of the ruling elite as well as opposition politicians. The hungry and the deprived did not oppose the takeover policy; this was done by those who lived on the fat of the land. Jayaprakash's opposition to the policy did only those people a good turn.

About the same time as the government announced its policy another point of conflict cropped up. On the retirement of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India in April 1973, Indira Gandhi inducted into that office a man of her choice. In the process she ignored the principle of seniority, and this affected the career of three judges who had until then determined the course of succession to the office.

The opposition parties were unreservedly critical of government's decision to abandon the principle of seniority. So was Jayaprakash. He suspected that the government's out-of-turn appointment was politically motivated. The regime not only wanted to have a pliable chief justice but also establish executive supremacy over the judiciary.

There were two sides to the question. One could not laugh away Jayaprakash's misgivings, and these could be appreciated if one had a wider perspective on the issue. Theoretically, it was justifiable on his part to suggest that the ultimate responsibility for appointing Supreme Court judges, including the chief justice, should not lie with the Prime Minister. On the other hand, Mrs. Gandhi's argument also could not be dismissed offhand.

It may be recalled that bank nationalisation was not the only instance of her efforts to extend the scope and content of state control over certain vital segments of the national economy. Almost immediately after the banks were nationalised she abolished that privy purses and other privileges of the former princely rulers, nationalised the coal industry and Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO), one of the country's largest private sector industries. These were not just populist exercises calculated for effect. On the contrary, they sent shock waves into the sanctuary of bourgeois-feudal interests.

The representatives of these interests did not take these developments lying down. With the help of their friends and allies, particularly in the country's highest echelon of the judiciary, they hit out against the regime. It is no hyperbole that "whether Gandhian or not, conservative elements opposed several of Indira Gandhi's efforts to erase vestiges of feudatory rights and to regulate capital and landed property resources. In this they found a staunch ally in the judiciary."

Particularly significant, or so the Prime Minister believed was the fact that the country's highest seat of justice turned out to be one of the most articulate upholders of the sanctity of vested interests. It is hard to deny that there is much truth in the observation that "by the 1960s, it was clear to most impartial observers that the Supreme Court was the most effective shelter of businessmen and landlords.

Nearly as many reforms had been declared invalid by the court in a decade and a half than in all of American constitutional history.³⁰⁸ This looked like a challenge to Prime Minister Gandhi. Her idea of tackling it included, among other things, a measure of control, indirect though, over the judiciary.

On the controversy over the out-of-turn appointment of A N Ray as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, as also government's contention that the judiciary could not impose restraints on Parliament, Jayaprakash took a very strong stand.

In a press statement on 15 May 1973, he stated that "all that has been said by the Prime Minister and her colleagues to justify their action, is utterly unconvincing. Much of it is also misleading ... The simple fact is that if the appointment of the Chief Justice of India remains entirely in the hands of the Prime Minister of India, as has been the case in the present instance, then the highest judicial institution of this country cannot but become a creature of the government of the day."

³⁰⁸Mary C Carras, *op cit*, pp 129-30

The disastrous consequences of this would be almost impossible to avoid, Jayaprakash asserted, "unless constitutional safeguards are provided to restrain Parliament from abrogating the fundamental freedoms of the citizens except suspending them for temporary periods and in clearly specified circumstances, and unless the independence of the judiciary is credibly assured the very foundations of our democracy will be in danger of being totally destroyed."³⁰⁹

On this issue Jayaprakash wrote to Mrs Gandhi. In her reply, dated 9 June 1973, to his letter of 16 May 1973 she said: "You have drawn some dismal conclusions from the recent appointment of the Chief Justice. May I submit to you that these conclusions are unwarranted. There is no question here of the executive subordinating the judiciary. Sometime ago there was a fear of a head-on collision between the legislature and the judiciary. . . . Even at that time I pointed out that the theory that the judiciary alone was the custodian of the Constitution was erroneous. . . . The experience of other nations with an independent judiciary also proves that although the judiciary is generally on the side of the *status quo*, it does respond to changed social needs."

"The various pronouncements regarding property by our own court have been so confusing that many people, who do not believe that property is a sacrosanct fundamental right, would wish our judiciary to take a more modern view. . . . The seniority principle had led to a high turnover of chief justices. I take it that no one maintains that the rule of law is safeguarded only by the principle of seniority. In the appointment of the new chief justice, we have only freed ourselves of a convention which had the sanction neither of the Constitution nor of rationality. . . . The outcry and controversy which have attended the appoint-

³⁰⁹See *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 16 May 1973 and *Everyman's*, 29 December 1973, pp 9, 11

ment seem to me to be wholly misplaced."³¹⁰

The tone of this letter was markedly different from the Prime Minister's earlier letters to Jayaprakash. It was curt. Also, it told him formally that he was labouring under a wrong impression and that she would brook no interference with her settled policy. This apparently reinforced Jayaprakash's apprehension that she was determined to have her own way. If in the process democratic norms and institutions had to be dispensed with, she could not care less. Or so Jayaprakash thought.

Replying, on 27 June 1973, to Prime Minister Gandhi's letter of 9 June 1973 Jayaprakash said he did not plead for "rights to property." Neither did he "consider these to be fundamental in the same sense as the rights to freedom of expression and association." He was not for upholding "any convention, either that of seniority or any other." All that he wished to plead for was that "there being a national consensus [that] the independence of the judiciary be preserved, it is necessary to provide in the Constitution appropriate procedure to secure that objective. In respect to the appointment of the chief justice of the Supreme Court... the present position is that the Prime Minister (acting of course through the President) is completely free to appoint anyone he or she may wish."

Jayaprakash recalled, referring to the appointment of judges of the Supreme Court, that the Constitution required "the President, i. e. the Prime Minister, to follow a certain procedure of consultation but that he should have untrammelled authority in appointing the chief justice.

"It should be obvious that as long as the seniority convention lasted no question of procedure arose. The simple fact is... if the appointment of the chief justice of India remains entirely in the hands of the Prime Minister of India, as has been the case in the present instance, then the highest judicial institution of this country cannot but become a creature

³¹⁰See Appendix A2 for copy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's letter of 9 June 1973 to Jayaprakash Narayan, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

of the government of the day.

"I cannot conceive of any person, committed to democracy, disagreeing with this simple proposition My statement was 'an earnest appeal' to you, and if your letter is your considered response to that appeal, I can only confess to a sense of utter disappointment and deep distress."³¹¹

It was more or less evident from Jayaprakash's reply, dated 27 June 1973, to the Prime Minister's letter that in the given context he had nothing to expect from her. His faith in her was gone and he seemed to have concluded that Prime Minister Gandhi was not at all inclined to diffuse the burgeoning crisis. It could easily be gathered that the distance between them was fast increasing. These two persons seemed to have concluded that the problem would have to be thrashed out elsewhere and not through mutual goodwill and understanding.

Everyman's comments on the widespread protest against the out-of-turn appointment of the chief justice would give an idea of what Jayaprakash really thought of it. The 18 August 1973 issue of the weekly said editorially: "If all [the] hullabaloo were only to vindicate the principle of appointment or promotion by seniority, it would be foolish. But it would be foolish to think it was so." And *Everyman's* was of the view that this principle was in fact "utterly indefensible." But then, it added, "at stake were far graver issues. The dividing line between one-party democracy and one-party dictatorship"...was not "indelible.

Particularly "in a society like ours," *Everyman's* emphasised, "the line is all the easier to obliterate." That was the reason why it reminded the Prime Minister that her duty would not be over by only reaffirming "her faith in democracy ... if she goes on gathering to the government all the powers in the fond belief because she is at the head of it they will not be used to subvert democracy she will have created, regardless of whether she intended it or not, the conditions of dictatorship."

³¹¹ *Everyman's*, 29 December 1973, pp 9, 11

Everyman's also told Mrs Gandhi clearly that "to believe that she has the sole monopoly of patriotism and that all her critics and opponents are a bunch of traitors ... betokens a mind that is more a dictator's than a democrat's"

"And now that even she cannot doubt that the policies she had pursued caused most suffering to exactly that section of the people whose interest and wellbeing was uppermost in her mind, it is time she had another look at those policies ... it is necessary that she dispels the well-founded suspicion that she wants the right to use appointment as a reward for political pliability and supersession as a punishment for political unhelpfulness."³¹²

It seemed there was general agreement among them all—socialists, communists (Marxist), capitalists, communalists and Jayaprakash—that Prime Minister Gandhi was all set to subvert democracy. Ibrahim Suleiman Sait, general secretary of the Indian Muslim League, was convinced that the Prime Minister was intent on "ushering in dictatorship through the backdoor."

Orissa's Pragati Party leaders believed that she was "dragging the country towards dictatorship." This more or less reflected also the views of the Swatantra Party and Congress (O), the last named being the rump of the original Congress after the 1969 split. While P Sundarayya, general secretary of the Communist Party (Marxist), settled for "labelling the ruling party as semi-fascist."³¹⁵

The most marked feature of the political scene about this time was the move to rig a non-communist alternative to Congress, branding the ruling party, or rather Prime Minister Gandhi, as intolerant of democracy. Even a man like J B Kripalani, then virtually a recluse, felt disturbed enough to stir himself with a view to exploring the possibility of organising a united opposition platform.

In a "personal and confidential" letter, dated 16 June 1973, to Jayaprakash, he said: "I have seen many ups and

³¹²*Everyman's* 18 August 1983

³¹³Quoted in Bhola Chatterji, "A Logical Necessity," *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta; 10 January 1974

downs for our country, but never have I seen India in such a sad plight. Politically, no standards remain. The structure of polity ... lies in [a] shambles, a play-thing of a few persons in power. The economy crumbles.... Judiciary ... is now made subservient to the government.

Internationally, India remains largely isolated, subordinated to one superpower [Soviet Russia]. ... Morally, the atmosphere stinks. ... For the first time, the future holds only darkness and fear. ... All the values that we cherish ... are steadily disappearing Can we today remain helpless spectators to this tragedy—the destruction of a nation's lifework?" That said, he admitted that they might have had "in the past" differed on "some matters," but that should no longer be allowed to stand in the way of their putting their heads together. In fact, Kripalani pleaded, "today, faced by an overwhelming crisis, we can rely on what unite us."

With this end in view, he was "inviting a few influential friends to get together, so that we may concert measures that will give to our people some hope and opportunity to salvage the future. I count on your cooperation. May I request you to make it possible to meet at my house on the 1st July 73 at 11 am?"

The list of invitees to the meet included, L K Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee, Charan Singh, Karpoori Thakur, Piloo Mody, Biju Patnaik, Asoka Mehta and Raj Narain. Replying to Kripalani's letter Jayaprakash said he was "glad that ... a meeting of important opposition leaders" had been convened. Though "not in party politics ... I am deeply interested in the consolidation of the opposition, which is so essential for the success of the parliamentary system of democracy which we have adopted." But he regretted his inability to participate in the confabulations because of his prior commitment.³¹⁴

³¹⁴See Appendix A3 for copies of J B Kripalani's letter of 16 June 1973 and Jayaprakash Narayan's reply, dated 22 June 1973, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi

Though Kripalani's attempt to persuade the entire spectrum of the non-communist opposition—RSS-supported Jana Sangh, conservative Swatantra Party, Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD), Congress (O) and Socialist Party—to help in forming a united opposition forum drew a blank, it was evident that the opposition thoughts were focused on one individual, Indira Gandhi, whom they accused of encouraging authoritarianism.

It was also clear that Jayaprakash was deeply involved in active politics and that his criticism of Indira Gandhi had, particularly after the death of his wife Prabhavati in April 1973, become increasingly acerbic.

According to Jayaprakash, the entire society had become a prey to a fell disease, which was, as he identified it, "the precipitous fall in the moral standards of our public life." He diagnosed that "not only the ruling Congress but also the opposition parties are stricken with the disease, as the interregnum between 1967 and 1972 [the reference was to the miserable performance of the opposition—led Samyukta Vidhayak Dal governments in certain states." He regretted that society had "become so cynical, so resigned, so reconciled to whatever may happen that nothing seems to outrage our conscience...or to stir us to action."

"Opposition leaders may, of course, shout and protest, try to exploit politically specific official lapses, call a *bandh* and even do worse, such as committing arson and destroying national property." But that would make no difference, Jayaprakash said. For "all that...has become a mere ritual," if nothing worse. This "the common man has learnt to take in his stride. He somehow senses, no doubt partly from experience, that his condition is likely to remain much the same even when the *bandh* leaders of today come to occupy the seats of power." His basic point was that the "democratic ethic requires that elections are free and fair.... Corruption, nepotism, fraud, lying are the enemies of democracy."

But Jayaprakash regretted to note that whenever he had "raised the question of ethics and politics with [his] Congress friends," he was "told that there was always

corruption in the manner as today...that power was always concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister." Of course, Jayaprakash did not agree with this.

He rather believed that "in politics, as in everything else in life," there were "limits beyond which it is fatal to go." He was convinced that "the permissible limits have already been crossed in this country." For this he held everybody responsible—"the elite, the opposition parties and even the common citizen. But in the nature of things the persons at the top of the power pyramid must take most of the responsibility."³¹⁵ And who could that be if it were not Indira Gandhi?

Jayaprakash seemed to have convinced himself that the basic cause of the country's malaise was the "*complete collapse of the moral authority of the country's political leadership*." According to him "the common people... have come to believe that most, if not all, ministers, including chief ministers, most of their representatives from gram panchayat presidents to members of parliament, most, if not all, officers of the government, high or low, have become corrupt.... Ministers of the Union government are not exempt from this common belief.... The Prime Minister's own image has become clouded, though even now the people seem to have more trust in her than in others. I am sure this picture is exaggerated. He even knows there are still honest men and women among the ministers (including chief ministers), people's representatives and officers."

Slightly varying the pitch he said: "But the masses have a sixth sense and their perception is largely true.... In the minds of the urban intelligentsia—the unattached and non-partisan larger part of it—the picture is darker still. Is it any wonder then that the moral authority of the political leadership, including that of the opposition, with rare exceptions, should have collapsed so completely?"³¹⁶

³¹⁵Jayaprakash Narayan; "First Things First;" *Everyman's*; 28 July 1973, p 16

³¹⁶Jayaprakash Narayan, "How to Check the Canker of Corruption;" *Everyman's* 1 September 1973, p 7

Talking of corruption, Jayaprakash observed: "Collection of party funds, specially for elections, is perhaps the largest source of political and other fields of corruption. One hears of fantastic amounts, running into tens of crores, collected by certain ministers of the Union Cabinet and placed at the disposal of the Prime Minister.... The way these funds are collected carry the corruption virus from the political into several other fields.... I should add that while no party is above collecting its funds in black money, sometimes more by compulsion than by choice, the ruling party alone is in the position to take the lion's share."

Referring to political defection, Jayaprakash said that in the game of defection from one party to another "money or ministership were the main baits and the highest bidder ultimately won. During the coalition government days in the states between 1967 and 1972, the opposition parties, which were the ruling parties then, played the game with as much gusto as Congress had ever played."³¹⁷

The point is not whether Jayaprakash's observations reflected the realities on the ground or whether his blanket accusations were tenable. For the sake of argument it may be conceded that his diagnosis of the country's ailment was correct and the charges against the ruling party and the opposition valid.

But the question would still remain: what had he done so long, particularly when he said that society's moral degeneration had been a continuing process over time. He assumed the role of a moral teacher sitting in judgment on one and all, but never bothered to turn the focus on himself.

Then again, the ruling Congress and the opposition parties were tarred with the same brush. Jayaprakash found the opposition parties as guilty of every act of wrongdoing as the ruling Congress. But only a year later he welcomed these parties to fight for his movement. Did such a meta-

³¹⁷Jayaprakash Narayan; "Clean elections not with dirty money." *Everyman's*; 8 September 1973, p 7

morphosis occur in the opposition parties that overnight they became acceptable to Jayaprakash? The 1974 Bihar movement and the subsequent Janata experiment proved to the hilt that nothing had meanwhile changed. The opposition parties remained what they had been before, when he thought they deserved to be condemned in the same language as the ruling party.

Interestingly, both Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi, even as the area of estrangement between them increased, appeared to hold almost identical views on the opposition's role in Indian politics. They seemed to suggest that the opposition parties at best were given to irresponsibility, at worst to crusading for a cause that was not quite their own. Both of them, each for his or her reason, seemed intolerant of the opposition and they seemed to resent anything that it might say or do. They denounced opposition politics as an essay in utter wickedness. As far as they saw it, the opposition was a millstone round the country's neck.

Off and on Prime Minister Gandhi could be heard to rub the point in that the opposition parties were cynically preoccupied with today at the cost of the tomorrow. She seldom missed an opportunity to accuse the opposition of "trying to weaken India and halt progress."³¹⁸

Jayaprakash was no less indignant with the opposition. While advocating "citizen's action" against "political and administrative corruption" he said the ruling party could not be expected to be of any help in the matter. Neither could he put his trust in the opposition parties. As he put it, "past experience of non-Congress coalition governments and...the apparent unconcern of these parties about this terrible disease, except as a whip to flog Congress with" had convinced him that there was "little hope from them."³¹⁹

³¹⁸Quoted in Bhola Chatterji, "A Logical Necessity," *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 10 January 1974, p 4

³¹⁹Jayaprakash Narayan, "Moral regeneration. a role for you," *Everyman's*, 29 September 1973, p 4

Equally interesting was the fact that notwithstanding their public postures, often mutually hostile, Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi were still in communication, apparently quite cordial, with each other. This would be evident from her letter of 14 November 1973 to Jayaprakash: "Thank you for your letter of October 31, which for some reason was received in my office on the 12th of this month.

"I should have been glad to participate in the foundation function of the Balwantray Mehta building. But Parliament will be in session during the days that you have indicated and I shall not be in town on the 17th and 18th. Perhaps the function could go on without me. I shall try to visit the building after it is completed.... I have...read your forthright reply to the charges made against you. Detractors never care about the pain they cause to people or the harm they do to truth and to decencies in public life. I hope you are taking care of your health."³²⁰

The change that took place in Jayaprakash's thinking contradicted most of the basic ideological formulations which had for many years determined his attitude towards man and society. Even a brief review of the train of events would suggest that it was not an act of deliberate choice that egged him on to a head-on collision with the regime. By the end of 1973 he was groping in the dark, debating and discussing with friends and colleagues, and particularly his own conscience, which way he should turn.

Symptoms of a crisis brewing in the country were much too clear to be ignored. Jayaprakash's reading of the situation suggested that there was a crisis of confidence, of values and of basic political morality. On 9 December 1973 he issued an appeal to youth saying that the "issue of democracy...is of fundamental and crucial importance." For democracy alone could help the people to attain all-round development and thus equip them to play their ap-

³²⁰See Appendix A4 for copy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's letter of 14 November 1973 to Jayaprakash Narayan, the original of which is with Nehru Museum and Library, New Delhi

pointed role in society. Regrettably however, he observed, "this very precondition of the people's civic life is in danger today," the most serious threat being "vitiation of the electoral process."

Jayaprakash would have people believe that "since independence elections have been growing more and more irrelevant to the people and to the democratic process," and of the many reasons for this "falsehood, corruption and physical force" were the most damaging. "Will our youth," Jayaprakash asked, "continue to look on idly at this strangulation of the democratic process at its very birth?" For his part, he would remind the country's youth that "time for action is here and now," leaving them to decide "what form their action should take." His appeal was for establishing "spontaneous organisations of the youth, which I suggest be named 'Youth for Democracy.'"³²¹

Jayaprakash touched on this theme again a few days later. In the course of his inaugural address to the All India Radical Humanist Association³²² he elaborated on what he expected of the youth. Admitting his "kinship of mind and spirit" with the Radical Humanists, he said he would like to "urge that we turn our attention more and more to the people, including the intellectual elite and the youth, and suggest forms and programmes of action." The nature of them must be not only "constructive and self-help" but also "combative, coercive and non-cooperative."

Developing his argument further, he said that in keeping with the logic of this he wished to "issue a call from this platform to build an alternative type and structure of democracy." He made it clear that his "call is not to the political parties, whether in or out of power, nor to Parliament, nor to the government. My call is directly to the

³²¹*Everyman's*, 22 December 1973

³²²Heir to M N Roy's legacy of sociopolitical thoughts and ideas this organisation was committed to work for the realisation of his concept of radical humanism

people, particularly to the youth."

Explaining why he rejected the political parties, he said: "We have the experiences now of 26 years of party democracy. During this period almost every political party has had its share of power, and we have a fair idea of how they have performed and what they have done for the people. I do not think it would be wrong to say that the difference between the performance, as distinct from the manifestoes, of the various parties, in or out of government, has not been more than that between Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

The entire spectrum of institutionalised politics in the form of political parties, ruling as well as opposition, was summarily discarded as a redundant appendix. But the more significant aspect of his statement was that "party democracy, that is democracy based on and manipulated by political parties, is most unsatisfactory and a defective system of democracy."

Jayaprakash was of the opinion that the people were tired of "all political parties and the present form and practice of democracy." They just suffered it "because there was no alternative before them." He hastened to add that he personally was not so despondent about the situation. Rather, he believed that "the people *have* a better alternative, there *is* a better form of democracy...a real people's democracy."

The alternative he suggested was not his brainchild, he said. None other than Gandhi and the Marxist turned Radical Humanist, M N Roy, had chalked out "the principles and outlines" of this form of democracy. True, Gandhi and Roy used different idioms and arguments in projecting their respective "picture of the political structure they would have attempted to build."

Nevertheless, Jayaprakash underlined, both Gandhi and Roy "conceived of a *non-party* democracy and both were clear that that democracy was to be built up from below, based on *gram raj* (village self-government) in the case of Gandhi and *people's committees* in the case of Roy."

Jayaprakash then spelt out the message he had for his

listeners: "My wish is...to place before you, and from this platform, before our people, particularly our youth, a programme of immediate sociopolitical action. My call is: ONWARD TO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY." Apparently, he had not yet despaired of Vinoba and his ideas. The identity crisis was still a few months away.

But his understanding of the sociopolitical situation was that the time was ripe "for a leap forward to a real people's democracy." He therefore entreated "the country's youth to seize this favourable opportunity and play the revolutionary role that the present age demands of them."³²³

One cannot help wondering whether all this was meant just for the record. For it was a matter of months before he would speak on an entirely different wavelength—Vinoba would be rejected along with the *sarvodaya-bhoodan* movement, political parties and party democracy would cease to be his *bete noir*, and ideology would be replaced by expediency.

About this time the situation in Gujarat took a turn for the worse. The state, which gave birth to Gandhi, had been experiencing acute economic distress from early 1973. Because of severe drought and the resultant failure of food crops in the previous years the price of essential commodities had skyrocketed without any sign of letup.

This exposed the people to unprecedented hardship and suffering. A thoroughly corrupt and lackadaisical administration only taxed the people's patience to exasperation. As the economic situation deteriorated, authority became increasingly rigid and unresponsive. The people's plea for redress met with vacuous sermons and chiding.

A highly explosive situation developed towards the end of 1973. The people's pent-up feelings found expression in the agitation students started in December 1973 over certain grievances, including rising food bills in their hostels.

³²³Jayaprakash Narayan; *Inaugural Address* (cyclostyled), All India Radical Humanist Association Conference, Calcutta, 29-30 December 1973, pp 1-4, 8

What began as a hearth fire soon developed into a state-wide conflagration under the aegis of the student-led Nava Nirman Samiti (association for reconstruction of society).

The student movement's charter of demands included dismissal of the "corrupt" Congress government headed by Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel, dissolution of the state Legislative Assembly and fresh elections. It should be clearly stated that, except for the limited support Congress (O) and the Jana Sangh extended to the student movement, the opposition parties did not play any significant role in this. The students were in no mood "to accept the leadership of either of these parties or any other recognised political group."³²⁴

On his own admission, Jayaprakash did not have much to do with the student movement in Gujarat other than contributing to generating a climate of politics of dissent and protest. The fact is the Gujarat movement was brought about by a number of factors, the relatively important of which were a severe economic crisis, maladministration, inaction when authority was required to act, wrong priorities and, last but not the least, partisan conflict in the ruling Congress. Another factor was that a section of students owing allegiance to the Nava Nirman Samiti was in league with the anti-Chimanbhai group of Congressmen. We may refer to Chandra Shekhar to verify this.

As Chandra Shekhar put it, "When the movement started in Gujarat it was encouraged in some ways in the beginning by Mrs Gandhi. It is not true that the movement could not have been checked in the beginning. But what happened at that time is that... Mrs Gandhi was not only trying to finish the opposition but was also trying to put down those who did not see eye to eye with her. Chimanbhai Patel, for his reasons, was not a sycophant of that category. So he was not in Mrs Gandhi's favour.

"When the movement started, New Delhi kept quiet on the issue. Or if New Delhi did not encourage the move-

³²⁴Trevor Drieberg and Sarala Jag Mohan, *op cit*, p 44

ment, it did not take the initiative to solve the problem in Gujarat. I remember a particular incident. At that time Uttar Pradesh was preparing for the midterm assembly poll. Mrs Gandhi and I were touring together in Eastern UP. In Allahabad, Jaswant Mehta was then Chairman of IFFCO (Indian Farmers' Fertiliser Cooperative). When we were coming to the helicopter Mrs Gandhi told Jaswant Mehta. "Jasubhai, why don't you come to Delhi?" He came to Delhi the next day, and on the third day he came to see me and said that Chimanbhai was creating problems for Gujarat.

"The student movement was just in the initial stages and [Mehta] showed his inclination for the student movement. He was then a Congressman and not in the opposition. And I said, 'Jasubhai, it seems you have got clearance from the highest authority in the country to create trouble for Chimanbhai Patel. I am not an admirer of Chimanbhai Patel, you can create problems for him but you cannot control the movement. Because the people's dissatisfaction is not only against Chimanbhai Patel, it is against all of us who are in Congress, those who have not fulfilled the promises made to the people. You can encourage the movement but after a while it would be impossible for you to contain the movement.

"That is exactly what happened... It is totally baseless to say that the opposition was trying to play politics in regard to this issue or that JP or foreign powers were trying to pull down Mrs Gandhi or were trying to create difficulties for her. Mrs Gandhi herself was not very keen that the Gujarat problem should be solved at that stage. And that happened. Chimanbhai had to go, but the movement also got out of hand."³²⁵

Nonetheless, Jayaprakash was so taken up with his subjective understanding of the Gujarat movement that he said Gujarat had been an eye-opener for him. In his own words: "For years I was groping to find a way out. In fact, while my objectives have not changed, I have all along

³²⁵Author-Chandra Shekhar taped interview, 2 August 1980

been searching for the right way to achieve them. I wasted two years trying to bring about a politics of consensus. It came to nothing. I also spent quite some time with the opposition parties to prevent the splitting of votes. I do not know what is wrong with the opposition parties but they are splitting into smaller and smaller groups. I came to the conclusion that the people must become their own saviours. But how to bring that about?... Then I saw students in Gujarat bring about a big political change with the backing of the people and the moral support of Ravi-shankar Maharaj and I knew that this was the way out."³²⁶

What was supposed to have been the pathfinder turned out largely a gamble for power between two groups of politicians who had owed allegiance to the same parent organisation, that is, Congress, before they fell out with each other. They did so over issues less sublime than what might have been considered worthy of Jayaprakash's approval. The Gujarat movement was not the kind of idealistic exercise that he thought it was. For that matter, the students of Gujarat were not incorruptible revolutionaries as some imagined, nor was the movement exclusively of their making. As has been already noted, other forces and factors were also involved. And they played a crucial role in what Jayaprakash believed to be a glorious manifestation of people's power.

The Gujarat movement started in December 1973. It did not take the movement more than three months to reveal its true colours. By 9 March 1974 *Everyman's*, Jayaprakash's mouthpiece, lashed out at the Nava Nirman Samiti in an editorial entitled "End of Idealism in Gujarat." Yet some three weeks earlier, on 15 February 1974, Jayaprakash spoke to students of Gujarat University at Ahmedabad and congratulated them on all they had done.

He also exhorted them to abandon their studies for at least a year to bring the ongoing "youth revolution" to

³²⁶*Everyman's*, 3 August 1974, p 3

a successful culmination. He observed that the Gujarat movement launched by "the youth should be an example for the youth in other parts of the country."³²⁷

Another confusing aspect of Jayaprakash's approach was his continuing fulminations against the political parties. Indeed, it was something worse than confusing because only months later he would enthusiastically rationalise the participation of the same political parties in his movement. Addressing a student meeting in Kanpur on 3 February 1974 he said: "And a graver situation has been created in the country as the masses have lost faith in the parties and their leaders, who only exploit them to capture power. The electorate is not free to exercise its franchise and parliamentary democracy has been converted into *dala'antra* (politocracy)."³²⁸

Everyman's was totally cynical about the opposition parties and doubted their integrity. If the ruling Congress acted against the people's interest everywhere the opposition's record was no better. *Everyman's* was of the opinion that the ruling party could not be depended upon to resolve the Gujarat imbroglio. At the same time it said "it would be futile to look up to the other political parties to steam the rot" in Gujarat. The truth was, *Everyman's* emphasised, that the opposition parties' "pursuits, their preoccupations are the same as those of the party in power. In power, assuming that to be a possibility, they cannot be expected to act differently."³²⁹

At another level, while Jayaprakash repeated that the country was fast being engulfed in a whirlpool of revolution J B Kripalani cast a damper on this. Rather sarcastically, he maintained that it was idle to talk of revolution in the given context. In fact, as he understood the situation, "it is not revolution round the corner, but it is chaos."

According to him, "the three conditions for a revolu-

³²⁷*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 16 February 1974

³²⁸*Everyman's*, 23 February 1974, p 1, 12

³²⁹*Everyman's*, 2 February 1974

tion ... were an ideology, an intellectual community vigorously and uncompromisingly expounding it, and thirdly, a constructive programme of social change." None of these was present in Indian society—"Where is the ideology ... Where is the Gandhi for that?"³³⁰

Everyman's denounced uncompromisingly the much eulogised Nava Nirman Samiti as a pretender and the Gujarat movement as a flash in the pan. The magazine's 9 March 1974 issue editorially observed: "We might as well write off the Gujarat stir as one more flash of idealism, as quickly extinguished as generated. The Nava Nirman Samiti has come out against militant tactics, thereby speaking a language of moderation very like careful, cautious politicians of the usual variety. The leadership favours a compromise on the question of dissolving the assembly.... Assembly dissolution is not any more a non-negotiable issue.... Gujarat might have set an example. Instead, the fate common to dissidence and protest in this country, eventual submersion into the establishment, has overtaken the stir begun there. ... Not long ago, the Gujarat stir leaders took out a procession 'drumming against brass *thalis*. They were sounding the death knell of the government, they said. They have however ended by beating the death knell for themselves."³³¹

Perhaps enough had not been said. Or so thought *Everyman's*. A few weeks later it returned to the Gujarat scene to look askance at the student community and student power, particularly in Gujarat, the supposed moving spirit behind the revolutionary wave that was said to have been sweeping the country. *Everyman's* commented editorially: "So, Gujarat was a freak.... The unseating of the Chief Minister—ought to have been accomplished by the students' own efforts, by their addressing themselves solely to the state authorities, and not recognising the Centre as any kind of arbiter.

³³⁰*Everyman's*, 23 February 1974

³³¹*Everyman's* 9 March 1974

"Instead, it [student community] chose to negotiate with the Centre. It is difficult to say how much of the grand finale of the Gujarat drama was due to collaborating with the Centre." This only confirmed, if that was at all necessary, that Chandra Shekhar did not weave a story when he referred to the ruling Congress' internal power politics as one of the key factors in the Gujarat problem. Whatever the facts, the concluding part of the editorial was more revealing than might be imagined. As *Everyman's* put it : "After Gujarat there have been student uprisings in other states too, mainly UP and Bihar. ... They are the usual students' cacophonies, demanding elimination of all scholastic conventions requiring hard intellectual labour The students, to be specific, want promotion without examinations.

"At any rate, the student power we sang to at the time of the Gujarat uprising, about three months ago, is finished. Student power now is the malignancy we know, and what it always will be."³³² This devastating observation on the student community, this sneer at student power did not emanate from the ruling Congress. It came from Jayaprakash's own mouthpiece, *Everyman's*. The irony of it was that despite this utterly unpleasant but mostly true observation Jayaprakash saw a revolutionary situation abuilding in the country in which student power was supposed to play the title role.

Jayaprakash also continued to maintain his charges, the most important being corruption, which he hinted that Prime Minister Gandhi was designedly refusing to face. His letter, dated 6 January 1974, to R K Karanjia, editor of the weekly *Blitz*, would seem to suggest so : "Your proposed Forum. Against Corruption has my full support... There seem to be only two ways in which something effective can be done about this terrible evil. Either the Prime Minister decides to take strong action irrespective of its

³³²*Everyman's*, 27 April 1974

political consequences or some way is discovered by which the people can play an effective role in controlling this disease.

"Unfortunately, the Prime Minister refuses to see how the canker of corruption is not only making nonsense of her socialism and *Garibi Hatao* and other programmes but is also eating into the very vitals of our nation. She seems to think that by merely denying every charge... she can wish away the nemesis that is bound to overtake her government and with it this unfortunate country."³³³

For her part Indira Gandhi accused at full blast the forces involved in the Gujarat affair of destabilising the country. In her reply on 1 March 1974 to the motion of thanks on the President's address to Parliament she touched on the political turmoil in Gujarat. She admitted that the economic situation there was rather disquieting, what with rising prices and shortages of essential commodities all over the country. Referring to the happenings in Gujarat she observed that subterranean "fascist" forces were at work there with the objective of destabilising the country and wrecking democracy. She said: "We know Gujarat is a rehearsal of what is being planned on a grander scale."³³⁴

Although Indira Gandhi and Jayaprakash publicly indulged, mostly indirectly, in mutual recrimination, they continued to maintain their two-way communication. Even a casual reading of some of their letters would seem to suggest that they had a liking and not a little respect for each other even at this stage. Thus it was not just a matter of routine for Mrs Gandhi to say, as she did in her letter of 27 February 1974 to Jayaprakash: "I hope you will take complete rest and soon overcome the result of the overstrain. You must be happy, as we

³³³The original of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter of 6 January 1974 to R K Karanjia is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

³³⁴*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 2 March 1974

all are, at Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh even though this has come about under an Islamic smoke-screen."³³⁵

It did not take Jayaprakash even 24 hours to reply. The striking feature of his letter was his addressing her as Indu, the form of address which none but her close elder relations used. The last paragraph of the letter said: "I was glad to see you looking so well, spruce and charming that night. May you remain like that all your life."³³⁶

The Gujarat drama, however much Jayaprakash might be eager to identify himself with it, ended on a humiliating note for him. Those who pulled strings from behind the scene—Morarji Desai was one of them—made every effort to keep him out of it. Desai, not Jayaprakash, who undertook an indefinite fast to force authority's hand. This did not go in vain. Chief Minister Patel was dismissed and the Gujarat Assembly dissolved on 15 March 1974. About a year later, fresh elections to the assembly were announced for 6 and 11 June 1975. It then became clear that the stir leaders had ensured that Jayaprakash would no be allowed to play any role in Gujarat.

It was decided that the Janata Front of opposition parties in Gujarat would contest all 182 seats in the assembly. The list of front candidates included 105 from Morarji Desai's group, Congress (O), 40 from the communalist Jana Sangh, 13 from BLD, six, three and one from the National Labour Party, the Socialist Party and the Muslim League respectively, and 14 independents.

Once again Desai dominated the show when a list of candidates was prepared and, as Carras rightly said, "JP was not even consulted." Not only that, as formal

³³⁵See Appendix A5 for copy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's letter of 27 February 1974 to Jayaprakash Narayan; the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

³³⁶See Appendix A6 for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter of 28 February 1974 to Gandhi, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

leader of the Janata Front "Desai...rejected the demand for representation from the movement out of hand. Earlier, Jayaprakash Narayan had made stinging criticisms of the manner in which front candidates had been selected." So far, so good. But the inexplicable aspect of it was that "in spite of such differences, Narayan urged the electorate to vote 'blindly' for United Front candidates."³³⁷

Well before the fire was doused in Gujarat, affairs in Bihar, proverbially one of the country's most badly administered states, reached a crisis. Students and opposition parties in this state were quick to take their cue from Gujarat and start a bush fire. The Jana Sangh appeared on the scene earlier than others. In mid-February 1974, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the RSS-controlled Jana Sangh's student organisation, conferred in Patna to draft a scheme for a movement on the Gujarat model.

Some other student organisations, including the Bihar Rajya Sangharsh Samiti (Bihar State Struggle Committee), decided to join forces with ABVP to launch a movement in Bihar. Subsequently, they requested Jayaprakash to lead them. The student struggle in Bihar started in March 1974.

Initially, Jayaprakash had nothing to do with the Bihar movement. It may be noted that some of his most trusted friends, particularly Chandra Shekhar, had advised him against any hasty decision to jump into the fray. In Chandra Shekhar's own words: "I pleaded with JP that he should not do anything which might create problems for the country. I said this country did not belong to Mrs Gandhi alone.... At that time... I was in Banaras where I addressed a journalists' forum or some function organised by the *Janavarta*.

"At that time JP had made a statement that Mrs Gandhi should be held responsible for all that had gone wrong in the country. I don't exactly remember the context but I said that it was not proper for JP to hold Mrs

³³⁷Marry C Carras, *op cit*, p 195

Gandhi responsible for everything. She was Prime Minister, but JP was no less important a person and if things went bad in the country he would be equally held responsible."

Chandra Shekhar suggested that, in the crisis situation which confronted the country both Jayaprakash and Prime Minister Gandhi "should try to apply all their energies to find solutions to the...problems."³³⁸ This was not the first nor last occasion that Chandra Shekhar pleaded for a meaningful dialogue between the two leaders with a view to working out a negotiated resolution of the national crisis. But that never came off, and for this failure they must take the blame.

Jayaprakash appeared however on the Bihar scene a little later, in April 1974 to be precise. But once he allowed himself to get involved in the movement he could not look back. Besides every other consideration there was the question of his prestige. He was an outsider, in Gujarat whereas Bihar was his home state and the people expected him to give leadership to the movement. Not unlike Gujarat, the Bihar movement started on a relatively low key. It was only after Jayaprakash agreed to involve himself in it that it acquired a new dimension.

Jayaprakash was not unaware that Bihar and Gujarat were not identical cases and that authority would go to all lengths to avoid a repetition of Gujarat in Bihar. It was well understood that authority's capitulation in Bihar would in all likelihood touch off a domino sequence the radiational effect of which on New Delhi could not but affect the country's entire power structure.

The only way to counterpoise this was to enlarge the scope and content of the Bihar movement to involve all sections of the people. It was not for nothing that Jayaprakash said, explaining the objective of the Bihar movement: "I have decided to fight corruption and misgovernment and blackmarketing, profiteering and hoarding, to fight for the overhaul of the educational system and for

³³⁸Author—Chandra Shekhar taped interview, 2 August 1980

a real people's democracy... This is not meant as a threat, but as a friendly warning. That shall be the beginning. The rest will follow."³³⁹

If seen in this perspective it may be relatively easy to appreciate what weighed with Jayaprakash to engineer the formation of a political organisation, albeit non-party. It should be remembered that he did not as yet have a competent political instrument which could be depended upon to execute his will. The *bhoodan-sarvodaya* outfit, which he had almost come to the point of rejecting, could not be expected to serve this purpose. And the opposition parties were ruled out because, apart from his continuing emphasis on non-party politics, their ranks were hopelessly fragmented and their attitude towards Jayaprakash's scheme of politics was not as constructively responsive as he might have wished.

What *Everyman's* said regarding the opposition parties even at this stage was revealing. Commenting on the congregation of some opposition parties, which took place in Delhi at the initiative of the Socialist Party in early 1974, the weekly said: "If the nine leftist parties assembled...last week were hoping to provide a radical viable alternative to Congress, they proved to be living in a fool's paradise... The meeting began with a bang...and it ended with a whimper."³⁴⁰ It was in this context that Jayaprakash decided to form his own organisation with an apparently non-partisan nomenclature—Citizens for Democracy. With Jayaprakash as president the newly established group had V M Tarkunde, a former Royist (follower of M N Roy) and then a committed Radical Humanist, as its secretary.

Presiding over the two-day (13-14 April 1974) founding conference of Citizens for Democracy, Jayaprakash observed: "Let no one think that the ruling party alone has been guilty of distortion of the electoral processes and the electoral laws. Whichever party, irrespective of its

³³⁹*Everyman's*, 6 April 1974, p 7

³⁴⁰*Everyman's* 13 April 1974, p 1

ideology, that has found it possible to indulge in any corrupt or illegal methods has not hesitated from resorting to it on the ground that they are fighting elections to win and not to lose."

Though in different form, Tarkunde echoed almost every word of Jayaprakash. As he put it, "the present crisis...was basically a moral crisis characterised by loss of idealism in politics and gross corruption from top to bottom in all public affairs." In such a state of affairs, Tarkunde emphasised, "political parties cannot be expected to be the means of moral regeneration. On the contrary, the struggle for power has the effect of depressing moral standards. Experience has moreover shown that no democratic opposition party can be expected to provide a viable alternative to the party in power."

This was their justification for the formation of Citizens for Democracy.³⁴¹ The message that Jayaprakash, Tarkunde and former Swatantra Party enthusiast N A Palkhivala, the three leading theoreticians of Citizens for Democracy, and *Everyman's* wanted to convey was that the entire spectrum of institutionalised politics had degenerated into a malignity, and Citizens for Democracy had been established to help society work out its own salvation.

How this would appear in comparison with a statement he made a few days later Jayaprakash perhaps did not bother to think over. Before leaving for Vellore to undergo a prostrate operation Jayaprakash said: "I must also express my grateful thanks to the opposition parties for their active support and participation in the movement.... My only plea to the political parties and the student wings has been, and is, that their participation in the movement should be in a non-partisan spirit, and no one should try to 'capture' the movement or use it for party political ends. I am happy to say that the concerned party leaders have assured me that it will be so."³⁴²

³⁴¹*Everyman's*, 20 April 1974, pp 6-7

³⁴²*Everman's*, 27 April 1974, p 3

This was the limit of Jayaprakash's simplistic belief. Or the not so charitably disposed critic might say that this was plain hypocrisy. Jayaprakash ought to have known better than trust the assurance of the opposition parties, whom he had repeatedly accused of every kind of evil deed. He did not seem to realise that asking political parties not to make political capital out of their participation in a political movement was itself an act of immorality.

Again, while inaugurating the two-day All India Youth Conference in Allahabad on 22-23 June 1974 Jayaprakash observed: "For quite some time I tried to persuade the opposition parties to do something" regarding his struggle against the evils that were enervating Indian politics. That was of no avail. Continuing, he said: "I do not wish to injure their feelings, but their sight also is confined to elections and the capture of power." It would be apparently difficult to logically study his state of mind at that time. He found fault with the same opposition parties whom he had patted on the shoulder only a little earlier, for participating in the Bihar movement.

His reference to elections and capture of power was also quite out of place. For, other considerations apart, he would accept a few months later Mrs Gandhi's challenge to prove his case through elections. And what could have been his purpose in contesting elections other than to capture power. Without power, he also realised, nothing could be done. After all, his fight against the Prime Minister was to instal his chosen men in power so that they might reconstruct society in the manner he desired.

He further told the youth conference that the opposition parties "had an opportunity in 1967 [the reference was to the non-Congress governments in certain states] but missed it. Ultimately, I concluded that the people have to become their own saviours.... My interest is not in the capture of power but control of power by the people."³⁴³

This tireless emphasis on "people" might have been

³⁴³*Everyman's*, 29 June 1974, p 1, 3

meaningful if Jayaprakash had remained steadfast to the basic concept of non-party, non-parliamentary policies based on people's power. But he did not do that. In the changed context his efforts to differentiate between the political parties and the people would naturally raise the question: Were the people and the political parties mutually antagonistic entities?

If so, if the political parties had nothing to do with the people and *vice versa* what weighed with Jayaprakash to observe later that but for the participation of the opposition parties in his movement it would have remained a very limited affair.

A fact that deserves to be taken into account here is that the death in April 1973 of Jayaprakash's wife Prabhavati was a turning-point in his political life. As he observed in *Prison Diary*, after her death he lost all interest in life, so much so that he was contemplating to renounce the world completely. But his mood changed on his realising he had still to pay his debts to society.

For an understanding of the atmosphere of the period—from 1973 to 1975—when almost a convulsive change occurred in Jayaprakash's state of mind reference might be made to certain personal factors. One of them was Prabhavati's death. It may be recalled that she was an intimate friend of Kamala Nehru, the frail, attractive and cultivated wife of Jawaharlal Nehru. As Jayaprakash told a newsman in May 1977, even after the preceding cataclysmic events had made it clear that India would never be the same again, "I always regarded Panditji [Jawaharlal Nehru] as my brother and he also treated me like that. My wife Prabhavati regarded Kamala Nehru as her closest friend."

Not only that, Jayaprakash said: "We always treated Mrs Indira Gandhi as our daughter." What he added was more revealing: "That relationship still exists."³⁴⁴ It was not surprising that as long as Prabhavati was alive a direct confrontation between Jayaprakash and Kamala

³⁴⁴*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 24 August 1977

Nehru's only child Indira was almost inconceivable. At any rate, Prabhavati would not let things slide by' allowing Jayaprakash to get involved in combat with her.

With Prabhavati's death this constraint was removed and Jayaprakash had no longer to worry about hurting his wife's sentiments. One might guess that her death in April 1973 dislodged a certain mental blockage, contributing to hastening the process of total confrontation between Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi.

To return to the Bihar scene. Jayaprakash's determined efforts to intensify the sweep and thrust of the movement, amply aided by the government's wooden-headed attitude and unrelieved repression, including wilful police assault even on Jayaprakash. The agitators' initial list of demands was rapidly enlarged to include resignation of the Bihar government and dissolution of the legislature. To set the record straight, "when the dissolution [of the assembly] was first raised by the Bihar Students' Action Committee, Jayaprakash said: "I advised my young comrades not to be rash and not to try to imitate Gujarat. But as events happened one after the other, it was clearly borne upon me that what the students were demanding, perhaps somewhat prematurely, was fully justified by subsequent events."³⁴⁵

The movement in Bihar was admittedly not a chance happening. It had long been in the making and attracted some mass support, particularly after Jayaprakash stepped in. But to describe it as a revolution that mirrored Jayaprakash's concept of "total revolution" would be a misnomer.

But that was precisely how Jayaprakash characterised it. In the process he gave enough hints to suggest that he had put behind him his past precepts. Addressing a public meeting on 5 June 1974 in Patna, he said: "This is a revolution, a total revolution. Ever since I first gave the call of Youth for Democracy, I have been telling the youth that they should be their own leaders. I will only

³⁴⁵*Everyman's*, 15 June 1974

advise. But friends insisted that I should accept the burden of leadership I accepted the task in all humility."

The next part of his speech probably gave a jerk to even some of his most unquestioning admirers. Apparently oblivious of the fact that he had all these years sedulously projected the image of a man who was way above the filth of scheming politics, he emphasised that he "won't agree to be a leader only in name. I will take the advice of all.... But the decisions will be mine and you will have to accept them. Then only will my leadership have meaning, and this revolution may be successful."

What was Jayaprakash driving at, one wondered. Did he aspire to have total power? The answer would be both yes and no. He asked for power but not in the sense it is generally understood. He was aiming at something much larger than what the conventional concept of power might suggest. He wanted to maintain a safe distance between power and himself. He desired to exercise supreme power without any institutional checks or accountability. Jayaprakash accused Indira Gandhi of harbouring authoritarian tendencies but himself wanted to exercise power without being answerable to any.

Another interesting aspect of his speech was that he still maintained his critical stance on the opposition parties, who were very much on the scene and who would be asked to support him unreservedly a little later. Referring to the ruling party's charge that "parties opposed to Congress have started this movement," he said: "You have seen that all parties have come out in their true colours. When the moment came for making sacrifice, for assembly dissolution, who is willing to do so?"

Jayaprakash had appealed to the opposition members of the Bihar assembly to resign their seats to back up his demand for its dissolution, but the response was poor. Significantly, the Jana Sangh did not let him down. As he recorded: "I think the largest number to resign will be of the Jana Sangh. Less than half seem to be willing to resign in the Socialist Party. It is the same in SSP. So far there have been no resignations by Congress (O)."

A visibly annoyed Jayaprakash, apparently unmindful of the language he used, emphatically said: "it was a myth, a falsehood spread by Indiraji and all others that the opposition are running this movement. Now the opposition parties are unable to take a single step forward, they have been split, most of their men are left behind. Can these parties run the movement, run a revolutionary movement?...this movement is of the youth, of students, of the people."³⁴⁶

This was perhaps one outburst of injured vanity Jayaprakash resorted to in those days. He knew perfectly well that the rank and file of some of the non-communist opposition parties were deeply involved in the movement. That apart, his almost obsessive reference to the "people" pioneering the movement was indeed ironical. As we shall see later, some time after the imposition of emergency he did not hesitate to accuse the same "people" of being "supine", incapable of responding, rightly and adequately, to his call.

The focus may now turn on an event which played no small part in influencing Jayaprakash's attitude to Prime Minister Gandhi. In April 1974, she had in the course of a speech accused some of her detractors of living on the largesse of corrupt people. Though she mentioned no names her target of attack was clearly none other than Jayaprakash. The impropriety and indiscretion of it could not be glossed over much as she tried to do it through Nandini Satpathy, Chief Minister of Orissa, Uma Shankar Dikshit, Union Home Minister, and her personal letter to Jayaprakash.

Obviously at her behest Dikshit tried hard to make amends to Jayaprakash for her Bhubaneswar speech. In a debate in Parliament in the third week of April 1974, Dikshit sharply pulled up a ruling party member for slandering Jayaprakash. Interrupting the erring member, he praised Jayapraakash as a "man of conscience...whom we hold in highest respect." Also, Dikshit re-

³⁴⁶*Everyman's*, 22 June 1974, p 1, 8

primanded the traducer for applying "cheap standards" to assess the action of a "person of such high personal and intellectual integrity"³⁴⁷ as Jayaprakash.

But this was of little help to assuage Jayaprakash's hurt feelings. A reference to the *Statesman* of 15 June 1974 would confirm this: "Asked if his exasperation with Mrs Gandhi had increased after she said in Bhubaneswar that he was living on the rich and staying in posh guest houses...[Jayaprakash] made no secret of the fact that he was extremely hurt by that remark and that his personal equation with Mrs Gandhi had ended since. 'The personal bond has been broken and the letters she has written have not reestablished it in any way.'"³⁴⁸

Although Jayaprakash subsequently devised that the Prime Minister's Bhubaneswar speech had further embittered his attitude to her, the fact remained that he could not get over the shock of it. The correspondence between them on this issue as well as Chandra Shekhar's observation would bear this out. For instance, in his reply on 10 July 1974, to the Prime Minister's letter of 29 June 1974 Jayaparkash said: "It appears from your letter of June 29 that you do not think it necessary to clarify publicly your position in regard to your remarks at Bhubaneswar because you did not take my name there and you 'cannot help if some newspapers added their own interpretation.' This saddens me beyond words. But please yourself.

"I am only a private citizen but I do have my self-respect. It is not I who even thought of asking you to make amends for your remarks. The question arose only when some Congress friends came to plead that my personal relations with you should be repaired."³⁴⁹ That the Bhubaneswar speech had a lasting effect on

³⁴⁷*Everyman's*, 27 April 1947, p 9

³⁴⁸*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 15 June 1974

³⁴⁹See Appendix A7 for copy of the correspondence between Jayaprakash Narayan and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi regarding this issue, the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

Jayaprakash cannot be disputed. Chandra Shekhar also confirmed that the "statement Mrs Gandhi made from Bhubaneswar came as a rude shock to Jayaprakash and it also created a lot of psychological differences in his attitude."³⁵⁰

It would be readily admitted that Jayaprakash had every reason to take exception to the Prime Minister's Bhubaneswar speech. No doubt it was an affront to his self-respect, but the point that was overlooked was that the Bhubaneswar speech came months after Jayaprakash had levelled, in August 1973, an apparently unfounded charge of corruption against Indira Gandhi. His pride would not allow him to judge himself by the same yardstick he used to judge others.

He seemed to have forgotten that in the given context none in politics was beyond the touch of corruption in one form or another. As a matter of fact, Jayaprakash also accepted money from corrupt businessmen when he was in active politics. Nor was there any dearth of corrupt businessmen to help many of his ventures even after his withdrawal from politics.

By mid-1974 it was common knowledge that the Bihar movement had given top priority to the dissolution of the elected legislature because of its "anti-people" role. To achieve this a formidable list of agitational schemes bordering on total confrontation with authority was drawn up. Its important features were "peaceful gherao [confinement] of the legislator at his residence," boycott of schools and colleges, no-tax campaign and "paralysing the administration." It was stressed that "payment of all taxes, and wherever feasible of indirect taxes also, to the state government is to be stopped." The methods prescribed to realise this included "paralysing of work in treasuries, sales tax offices and the like."³⁵¹

Anybody not acquainted with the mystique of Jayaprakash's politics at this stage might conclude from this

³⁵⁰ Author—Chandra Shekhar taped interview, 2 August 1980

³⁵¹ *Everyman's*, 17 August 1974, p 11

programme of action that a state of civil war, albeit non-violent, prevailed in Bihar. Indeed, the range and content of the movement was widened to the extent that authority was left the only option of either capitulation to or total confrontation with Jayaprakash.

His statement elaborating the nature and character of the Bihar movement would in a way indicate this. Exhorting the people, in September 1974, to assemble in Delhi on 2 October, Gandhi's birthday, Jayaprakash declared: "In reality the Bihar movement aims to complete the revolution that Gandhiji's assassination had abruptly left unfinished." He complained that the country had since abandoned "the path and the goals" Gandhi had chosen. Indian society must go back to that in order to overcome the crisis it faced.

The struggle in Bihar, Jayaprakash observed, was attempting to do just that. Admitting that this "can be realised only in a peaceful total revolution," he said "the exigencies of the struggle have so dictated that resignation of the Bihar Ministry and dissolution of the state Legislative Assembly have become its immediate goals. The offensive to begin from 2 October is meant to achieve these immediate goals, after which it would be possible for the students and the people to concentrate on the long-term ends of the struggle."

He deplored the fact that but for Prime Minister Gandhi the Bihar government and the assembly would have ceased to exist long ago. They were still there because "the Centre, and in particular the Prime Minister, had made this an issue of prestige." He invited one and all, including the opposition parties, to join battle considering that "the Bihar struggle is no longer a state issue. It has acquired an all-India importance and the country's fate has come to be bound up with its success or failure."³⁵²

This was an amazing demonstration of Jayaprakash's

³⁵²Jayaprakash Narayan; "Dilli Chalo," *Everyman's*, 21 September 1974, p 2

inability to see the Bihar movement in its right perspective. However significant the movement might be, it was preposterous on his part to suggest that the outcome of it would eventually determine India's fate. Again, did he expect that while he would go about paralysing the state, no matter how justifiable his demands might be, authority would just idly look on at this without attempting to assert itself?

For that matter, did he imagine that an organised state would allow itself, all its institutions of power, both voluntary and involuntary, remaining reasonably intact, to be dismantled brick by brick by a movement that was at best a regional phenomenon. There is no denying that Jayaprakash never succeeded in building up a mass movement at the national level. Whatever he did was essentially restricted to the heartland of North India, more specifically the Hindi-speaking region. It left the rest of the country, particularly the South, more or less untouched.

The Bihar movement confronted Indira Gandhi with a yes or no choice, she must either accept Jayaprakash's demands and suffer the consequences or face the challenge out. This was the point he sought to drive home to her after a three-day total Bihar *bandh* in early October 1974. Addressing a mass rally in Patna on 6 October 1974, he said: "If the Prime Minister refuses to see the reality, I say it with full responsibility that she should quite her post, she is unfit to be the Prime Minister of a great country like India, if she can't see this fact." The fact was, as Jayaprakash saw it, 95 percent of the people of Bihar "have given their verdict" that the "present ministry and assembly in the state must go."³⁵³

His voice rose sharply to declare that his movement was nothing if not "total revolution." The Bihar movement, Jayaprakash declared, was no longer "between the people of Bihar and the Gafoor ministry but between

³⁵³ *Everyman's*, 12 October 1974, p 8

the people of India and the Prime Minister.''³⁵⁴ By pinpointing that the movement was directed against her Jayaprakash only contributed to reducing it to a personal level. This suited the ruling party's admirably. In fact, the ruling party had all along been claiming that Jayaprakash's movement had only one objective, removal of Prime Minister Gandhi from office.

As the movement was coming to a climax, it acquired an unmistakably North Indian ethos. By their acts of omission and commission both Jayaprakash and Mrs Gandhi had strengthened the impression that they were engaged in what was largely a question of personal prestige and power.

The Prime Minister's case was relatively simple. She was determined to fight any move that might erode her power, leave alone the question of her ouster from office. She was prepared to make political concessions if that became absolutely unavoidable, more particularly if that would contribute to finding a way out of a crisis. But she could easily become an unrelenting persecutor should there be any attempt to challenge her politically.

For his part the Jayaprakash of the mid-1970s was patently a different person from what he was in the mid-1950s when he cast off his ideological moorings and deserted tried friends and colleagues to act as the surrogate of a man who was eventually found out to be inextricably tied to the establishment. Jayaprakash regretted having wasted his time chasing an illusion when his almost two-decade-long association with Vinoba ended in March 1975 on the bitter note of his refusal to endorse the Bihar movement and all that went with it. Jayaprakash virtually wrote off the *bhoodan-sarvodaya* movement as a barren exercise. This once again confirmed his failure to restructure the movement as an effective political tool.

It was all too evident that by the mid-1970s Jayaprakash had apparently swerved from much of what had

³⁵⁴ *Everyman's*; 9 November 1974

been his sociopolitical orientation since his withdrawal from the socialist movement. His once passionately held theory against party politics and parliamentary democracy was put in mothballs. He denied that "the Bihar movement aims at the establishment of partyless democracy" because the very idea of it was anathema, and rightly so, to the opposition parties whose support he needed.

But his argument, obviously meant for public consumption, was that the concept of partyless democracy "common to Marxism and the Gandhian ideals"...has been the objective of the *sarvodaya* movement...but it is a long-term ideal...I have come to believe that partyless democracy cannot be established before we succeed in achieving a classless society."³⁵⁵ Of course he did not bother to explain how he proposed to establish a classless society.

Also laid up were his hitherto committed ideals, principles, moral categories and objectives. The test of immediacy theory and the concept of "moral regeneration of politics" no longer seemed to cause him sleepless nights. As his confrontation with the regime deepened, he swallowed his almost contemptuous denunciation of the opposition parties and solicited their support. The Bihar movement, which was "intended to cleanse all that was dirty and rotten in public life,"³⁵⁶ got bogged in the quagmire of election politics. As soon as Mrs Gandhi announced in November 1974 that elections would be held in Bihar, ostensibly to give an opportunity to the parties to obtain the people's mandate, Jayaprakash welcomed it.

By accepting the ruling party's challenge, on its terms, to take the issue to the electoral arena he almost walked into a one-way street. It was as if he had agreed to play with dice loaded against him. Particularly when not one of his demands for reforms, electoral or otherwise, had been conceded and the proposed elections were to be

³⁵⁵*Everyman's*, 16 November 1974, p 2

³⁵⁶*Everyman's*, 9 November 1974, p 4

held on the basis of the electoral laws he had previously condemned. As a political analyst sympathetic to Jayaprakash observed: "It is indeed surprising that JP should have accepted the challenge of the ruling political party to participate in the elections when these elections are to be fought in the same old corrupt manner."³⁵⁷

He did not apparently realise that the Prime Minister's move was tactical, to buy time to stave off the impending crisis. Nor did it seem to occur to Jayaprakash that involvement in elections at that stage would in all likelihood derail his movement. It would inevitably attract which he would have little or no control.

Overseeing a mass movement demanded a kind of talent, organisation and leadership qualitatively different from that required to assemble an election apparatus and operate it competently. To conduct an election in the given context against a seasoned and resourceful opponent like the ruling Congress called for such expertise in political manoeuvres, management of men and resources and tactics of *real politik* as Jayaprakash could hardly expect to command.

Yesterday's much despised opposition parties overnight acquired enough respectability to be invited by Jayaprakash to share the burden of the proposed electoral battle against the ruling party. On 13 April 1975 he wrote to the leaders of the Bharatiya Lok Dal, Jana Sangh, Congress (O) and Socialist Party, whose only common ground was opposition to the Prime Minister, explaining the importance of a parliamentary alternative to the ruling party. It was an imperative need because, he said, "if at the general elections people do not have an alternative to Congress, I am afraid the results cannot be as all good as public opinion in the country at present indicates.

"A coalition government at the Centre with parties who come to power after elections will inspire no confi-

³⁵⁷C P Bhambhri, "Seeds of Violence", *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 13 June 1975

dence and in my opinion it would be as disastrous as the coalition governments after the 1967 state assembly elections... As a postscript let me add that if the parties do not agree to come together, the people are going to force them to do so."³⁵⁸

The opposition parties did not dare ignore this appeal though most of them had little respect for Jayaprakash's idiom and understanding of politics. Captives of frustration and an inconsequential existence, thanks largely to personal factors and personality-oriented politics, the opposition parties had no alternative to sticking to him. They clung to the hope that Jayaprakash would rehabilitate them, believing he was the only leader who could successfully confront the ruling party.

One of Jayaprakash's charges against Mrs Gandhi was that the basic ingredient of her politics was pragmatism. This indeed was a fact. It was also a fact that pragmatism, particularly of the variety which dominated the ruling party's thinking, could hardly be claimed to be consonant with principles, ethics of political conduct or moral values in absolute terms. By this token the ruling party's scheme of politics could easily be condemned. But then could Jayaprakash really maintain that he had all along been entirely above this, particularly after he staged a come-back to active politics in the late 1960s.

In the course of an interview, according to the *Statesman* of 15 June 1974, Jayaprakash, "asked if he had any particular ideology in view...said ideology was a very deceptive word, what was wanted was the end of all ideologies. 'The communists are not only conservative but also reactionary. The Russian state is a conservative state. Compared with it, China is still revolutionary. The first condition is honesty and sincerity and the second is the attitude towards exploitation, which has nothing to do with ideology.

"Let people sit together. If they wear ideological blin-

³⁵⁸Quoted in *Editorial-II; Janata*; (May Day 1975 Number, vol XXX, no 14, p 5)

kers, they will be thwarted in their attempts to solve the problem because ideology comes in the way of practical policy.... I do not think ideology helps clarity. I think all ideologies have become old."³⁵⁹ One wonders what Jayaprakash was trying to drive at. Could the question of ideology be so unceremoniously dismissed? Why did he then have to make an ideological fetish of his concept of total revolution?

If we take Jayaprakash at his word the Bihar movement was nothing short of a revolution. It was however a revolution that required no ideological label. Nor did he "think a detailed socioeconomic programme such as that of a political party, particularly of the Left, is advisable for the movement." Perhaps as an afterthought Jayaprakash added that he and his "colleagues in Bihar have a fair idea of the broad social, economic, political and cultural frame for the movement." Should one insist on a little more specific idea of this, it was, "broadly speaking, a Gandhian frame."³⁶⁰

So Gandhi was the password on the strength of which anything, he apparently presumed, could be justified. Jayaprakash's statement seemed to suggest that he had taken the whole thing as a political gamble, expecting the people to participate in it on the assumption that he knew best what was or was not good for them.

He returned to this theme in early May 1975. Commending his "Manifesto for a new Bihar," he remarked that the people's "continued interest...in the movement belies the view held among some elite circles that unless the objectives of the movement are clearly spelled out, it will gradually lose the support of the people." For the benefit of those who might still look askance at it he said: "Framing of programmes and policies has been the concern of the political elite in this country. But the history of the past years has shown that mass support does not depend upon detailed policies and programmes of political parties, but entirely on other factors.

³⁵⁹*The Statement*, Calcutta, 15 June 1974

³⁶⁰*Everyman's*; 1 December 1974

"What the people want is not promises, but their implementation. From their sad experience of the last 27 years the people have come to regard honesty to be a much greater virtue than radical programmes.... I have been at some pains in the past months to explain that the Bihar movement is a people's movement and not a movement of a united front of opposition parties. What could the objectives of such a movement be? Obviously they could only be fulfilment of the people's desires and needs, their freedom from exploitation, oppression, poverty and a host of similar injustices."³⁶¹

Imagine a total revolution to rebuild a complex sub-continental society being started without any ideology, policy, programme or organisation. One may be forgiven for asking whether contemporary history, at any rate its Indian chapter, records another case like this. Did Jayaprakash expect that the people would raise no question and express no doubt but follow him blindly? Perhaps he did, and that ultimately led to the ignoble demise of the Janata experiment.

It would be superfluous to add that the general expectation was that a movement initiated by Jayaprakash would have a rational ideology, firm principles, a properly formulated policy and an achievable socioeconomic programme. This might generate a certain moral and spiritual climate propelling society towards a new horizon.

This does not dispute the relevance of most of the basic issues he raised, or the logic of his insistence on positive socio-political measures to eradicate corruption, initiation of much-needed reforms in the electoral system, preventing defection of legislators and the like.

It is not intended either to question Jayaprakash's advocacy in support of mass action and, if necessary, civil disobedience in a functioning democracy. The exception some political purists took to his resort to mass action, holding that mass action in a democracy was anti-demo-

³⁶¹*Everyman's*; 11 May 1975, p 7

cratic, was illogical. Mass action in a democracy was a perfectly legitimate instrument if authority deliberately remained unresponsive to right a wrong, annul or frame laws to meet popular grievances or to correct imbalances that might have grown within the system.

But the ideas and approaches, methods and manoeuvres he banked upon were unequal to the task he had set himself, to say the least. Others besides some of his admiring supporters also could not help taking critical notice of it. For instance J D Sethi, who went to the extent of saying that "a study of the Soviet or the Chinese revolution or for that matter the Gandhian revolution would show that what JP has achieved in one year no other movement has achieved before."

But this did not blind Sethi to some of the inherent drawbacks of Jayaprakash's movement. The three most "glaring weaknesses" which according to him, beset the movement were a "very weak" organisational structure, Jayaprakash's failure "to create well-identified second rank leadership" and lack of clearly defined "socioeconomic objectives" for the movement. Unless these defects were "soon" removed Jayaprakash "will not be able," Sethi observed, "to make much headway and indeed will run the risk of losing his movement both in Bihar and the rest of the country."³⁶²

Another supporter of the movement had still harsher words to say. In an article in *Everyman's* of 20 April 1975 Anand Patwardhan tried to bring home to Jayaprakash the fact that his ideas and actions often created the impression that he was not as invulnerable, ideologically, ethically and otherwise, as people were expected to believe. The flaws in his personality were such as could not but have an undesirable effect on the movement.

The essence of Patwardhan's argument was that Jayaprakash had all along "displayed a strange myopia when evaluating the merits of people who are close to him or

³⁶²J D Sethi, "JP Movement: What Next?," *Young Indian*, vol 5, no 26, 5 June 1975, pp 9-10

who claim to support him." Accusing him of being less than objective in his assessment of men and events, Patwardhan observed: "When old political enemies like RSS or old individual politicians of dubious virtue have come out in his support, JP has almost invariably welcomed them as prodigal sons who have undergone a change of heart. He has thus ignored the more obvious explanation—that the change has been less one of heart than of historical self-interest." His contention was that Jayaprakash must get over these frailties if his "credibility as a champion of a clean social order is to be maintained."

An almost reproachful view was taken of Jayaprakash's efforts to win over Congressmen like Jagjivan Ram and Y B Chavan. In the words of Patwardhan: "JP has repeated his wooing of...Jagjivan Ram and Y B Chavan. Neither of these leaders have been particularly known for their honesty or moral courage. What then does JP hope to gain from their support, apart from a political victory over Mrs Gandhi and CPI?" Patwardhan could not be accused of making frivolous remarks when he said that "JP's movement appears to be intent on taking short-cuts. In its hurry, it may leave the revolution behind."³⁶³

Even at this stage some of Jayaprakash's friends who were not implacably hostile to the Prime Minister, particularly Chandra Shekhar, made persistent efforts to convey to both of them of the grave nature of the social and political danger involved in allowing their respective equations to be carried to their logical conclusion.

Time and again Chandra Shekhar, who had a reasonable understading of the forces and factors intent on intensifying the conflict between Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi, stressed the point that a solution to the burgeoning crisis must be worked out other than on the streets. His suggestion was that they should get together to thrash out the problems facing them.

Conveniently placed as Chandra Shekhar was—he was

³⁶³Anand Patwardhan, "Is JP's Movement at the Crossroads?," *Everyman's*, 20 April 1975, pp 9-9

at once an important member of the Congress Working Committee and a trusted friend of Jayaprakash—he had an insider's view of the goings-on on either side of the barricade. If he was aware that Jayaprakash's camp did not consist of only innocent idealists and moral crusaders, he also knew that insidious forces in the ruling party were pressing for a direct confrontation between Jayaprakash and the Prime Minister.

In a signed editorial in the 10 October 1974 issue of *Young Indian* Chandra Shekhar said: "Many discarded politicians find an opportunity to resurrect themselves under the cover of JP's personality. They indulge in fomenting and exaggerating people's anger with the sole objective to usurp power which is antithesis of JP's stand ...it cannot be ignored that there are forces which in the name of countering JP's movement have been conspiring to force JP into a desperate position where extreme steps seem inescapable."

With a direct reference to the malevolent forces in the ruling Congress Chandra Shekhar, almost prophetically, observed: "The atmosphere of escalating confrontation with JP has ominous portents.... All attempts to fight JP are bound to fail. His movement does not call for resistance but understanding and persuasion." At the same time, Chandra Shekhar reminded Jayaprakash that it would do nobody good should he ignore the serious implications of his movement.

As Chandra Shekhar saw it, at Jayaprakash's "age and in his present health, it would be humanly impossible for him to contain elements of status quo and reaction who have infiltrated into the movement." That said, Chandra Shekhar came to the heart of the subject. For Jayaprakash "to lead it [the movement] without institutional framework, requisite discipline and a clearcut alternative seems to be a rather unhappy exercise in adventurism which does not fit in with his personality,"³⁶⁴ Chandra Shekhar emphasised. But his was a voice in the wilder-

³⁶⁴*Young Indian*, 10 October 1974

ness. None of those who could settle or unsettle matters seemed to have time to listen to sensible words.

About seven months before an emergency was declared and 17 days after the law-enforcing agencies of the Bihar government savagely assaulted Jayaprakash for leading a peaceful demonstration in Patna on 4 November 1974, Chandra Shekhar again touched on the same subject. In a signed editorial in *Young Indian* he observed that a purposive dialogue between Jayaprakash and Prime Minister Gandhi should find a solution to the problems which scheming persons were exploiting to "suit their design of brikmanship."

The most sad part of the whole thing was that, in Chandra Shekhar's opinion, "differences on inconsequential issues have been magnified and they are slowly and gradually driven to the point of no return." And he had no doubt that "certain elements in our body politic...are out to vitiate the process of reconciliation [between Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi] and are making determined efforts for a showdown." The situation was full of ominous possibilities, but that could be avoided and the country put back on the rails, Chandra Shekhar argued, "if JP and Indiraji choose to discuss the problems and make joint efforts to resolve them."³⁶⁵

The point needs to be made that, notwithstanding the haunting rhetoric of revolution and the like, the situation admitted of a negotiated return to the normal democratic process of politics. But that was a proposition hated most by the corrupt and scheming elements in the camps of both Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi. It suited their interests to keep the pot boiling, so that the conflict could be resolved the way they desired.

In this context a reference to J D Sethi, otherwise a stern critic of the Indira Gandhi regime, may be relevant. Referring to Congress president D K Barooah's devious role in politics Sethi observed: "The most disastrous element in his approach was to bring about confrontation

³⁶⁵*Young Indian*, 21 November 1974

between Mrs Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan. At a time when JP's movement was just beginning to grow, Mr Baroodh denounced the movement as fascist.... Instead of defusing the movement by having a dialogue with JP and accepting his genuine demands, Mr Barooah took upon himself the amazing task of fighting him and most amazingly carried it out to so much of his own party's discredit."³⁶⁶ It would be naive to suggest that Barooah played a lone hand. The fact is he was member of a fraternity that could count on reciprocal elements in Jayaprakash's entourage.

Paradoxically, when all the best wishes of all men of reason failed to resolve the crisis the judiciary came to the rescue. On 12 June 1975 Justice Jag Mohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court set aside, on the basis of his findings in the Raj Narayan election case, the election of Indira Gandhi to Parliament.

Subsequent developments, including her decision to continue as Prime Minister on the strength of the absolute stay order granted by the Allahabad High Court, culminated in the declaration of emergency. This warded off the immediate crisis only to prepare the ground for a bigger crisis some two years later, when she presided over the termination of the three-decade-old uninterrupted Congress rule.

In the 1977 parliamentary elections she had to concede victory to the Janata Party, the supposed protege of Jayaprakash. It is another matter that Janata's triumph signified Jayaprakash's ultimate defeat. For the Janata government did everything to disprove that it subscribed to the thoughts and ideas of Jayaprakash.

³⁶⁶J D Sethi, "The Role of Congress President," *Young Indian*, 17 April 1975, p 10

CHAPTER VI

Promise and Fulfilment

I spent a few days in Patna in February 1978 watching Jayaprakash from close quarters. Taking advantage of our long association, I asked him questions of a personal nature, about his life and philosophy. One of them was: Did he have any regrets about the past, about anything that he might have done in the course of his long and intensely lived political life? Did he believe that he had been able to live up to his principles?

For a moment Jayaprakash seemed lost in thought. When he had collected his thoughts he said: "All that I can say is that I have tried to live up to my principles, but I can't claim that I have actually succeeded. I don't know whether if I were to start life afresh I might be able to avoid certain mistakes—or wrongs, misdeeds, whatever you call them—but as of today I feel that I have on many occasions and in many fields failed myself. It would take a long effort and self-analysis and self-understanding to answer you fully. Somehow I have not been ever attracted by Jayaprakash Narayan, that is, I have never felt that I should write about myself, my experiences."³⁶⁷ This was a candid statement. No man who shied away from facing his moment of truth could make such an honest assessment of himself.

A cluster of factors, a series of portentous events, social, political and economic, had taken place in the interregnum between Jayaprakash's apparent withdrawal from active politics in 1954 and his reentry into the pervasively amoral arena of party and power politics.

In sequence of time it might briefly be stated thus: Jayaprakash's growing disenchantment with *bhoodan*-

³⁶⁷ Author-Jayaprakash taped interview, "I tried to be as true as possible to myself," *Sunday*, Vol 6, No 1, 19 March 1978, p 13

sarvodaya as the basic instrument to realise his dream of a resurgent India; failure of his efforts to enrol the support of the political parties, including the ruling party, for his concept of consensus politics.

At almost every crucial point Jayaprakash, unlike Gandhi, failed to adjust his order of priorities, without compromising his basic principles, to the challenge of the times. Not infrequently, his idiom conveyed an image of the visionary and dreamer while his deeds apparently indicated a warped understanding of principles.

What we have seen of Jayaprakash might suggest that his ideas and actions often travelled in opposite directions, that emotion got the better of the logician and that his assessment of men and affairs could be swayed subjectively. He could take the plunge just as easily as he could break off in the middle of an all-or-nothing struggle. In defence it might be argued that he was no meanderer in politics. There was a method, indeed rationale, in all that he did and that inconsistency was not a flaw in his character.

This argument might not however convince those who assess men and ideas in categorical terms. To them Jayaprakash might still appear one of contemporary Indian history's most enigmatic characters who defied labelling, whose thoughts and actions almost at every turn suggested that consistency was the hobgoblin of little minds. It might even be suggested that Gandhi anticipated Jayaprakash when he stated in the early 1930s: "I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of truth, my God, from moment to moment and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he still has faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose

the latter of the two on the same subject."³⁶⁸

Should this be considered inapplicable to Jayaprakash, there would be no alternative to dismissing him as a muddle-headed theoriser who insisted on rationalising his every move in terms of lofty morals. This however would not stand scrutiny if we agreed not to take the apparent for the real.

The sixth parliamentary election in March 1977 terminated the 30-year-long sway of Congress, contrary to even the most optimistic expectation of the opposition. Overnight the scenario changed, confirming that the people were the ultimate sovereign of the land. That was Jayaprakash's finest hour. A gratefully admiring society called him a pathfinder and discovered in him a man who was second to no other Indian, who was truly heir to the heritage of Gandhi.

Away in Delhi, which had seen the rise and fall of many empires, a greying, very attractive 62-year-old woman had every reason to believe that this was the most sombre March morning in her life. Until the evening before she could decide the fate of some 650 million Indians and she had only to make an imperious gesture to have her way.

Till then she seemed to have carried the world before her. She had imagined that the opposition to her regime essentially reflected the feeling of a minuscule segment of Indian society which enjoyed the best of both worlds. The majority of the people, she thought, were with her and would stand by her no matter what she might say or do.

But the outcome of the sixth parliamentary election shocked her as nothing else had done. The nameless multitude, who had never known that it was like to have a square meal at least once a day, gave her a rebuff she had not even remotely expected. The light went out at No. 1 Safdarjung Road, which housed the country's Prime

³⁶⁸Quoted in Clifford Manshardt, *Pioneering on Social Frontiers in India*; Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1967, p 103

Minister, as the news spread like wildfire 'hat a "silent revolution through the ballot box" had ended the longest 20 months from the time India became free.

Rejected by 'he very people who had till a few days before been loud in her praise. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi called it a day as the nation woke up with a start. But did the changed political scene also indicate 'he completion of Jayaprakash's mission? An unqualified no should be enough to answer that question.

For confirmation of which none other than Jayaprakash may be referred to. Much earlier than many expected, he woke to discover his experiment had misfired, that most of the men he had depended upon to accomplish his total revolution were made of straw. They had no understanding of the historical perspective nor did they have any inclination to learn their lessons from history. The Janata Party with which Jayaprakash had identified himself was obviously not the right tool for effecting even a modicum of the much-needed basic changes in society, not to speak of giving form and content to the concept of total revolution.

In a taped interview with me about a year after the Janata Party had formed a government Jayaprakash admitted: "Since Janata is not a homogeneous party I think its main challenge is from within. Much depends on the extent to which it becomes—I will not use the word monolithic—a party which is properly integrated and of one mind... In socioeconomic policies I think it will be a middle-of-the-road party There will be nothing very revolutionary in what it does, but I think it will not be either a reactionary or even a conservative party. It will be a party of moderate progress, moderate change."³⁶⁹

Some months later he observed that "most of the constituent elements of Janata were never revolutionary themselves and it is only natural that a party formed by them

³⁶⁹ Author-Jayaprakash taped interview, "True Socialism Believes in the Good of All"; *Sunday*, 25 June 1976, *op cit*, p 25

would not be revolutionary either."³⁷⁰

This was not a particularly revealing statement. The people knew all about it. Yet the fact that they rallied to the support of Janata was because they had put their trust in Jayaprakash. That naturally would raise the question: Why did Jayaprakash rely on the men who flocked round him but deserted him when he insisted on holding them to their promises to the people? What persuaded him to believe that the otherwise disparate and often mutually hostile constituents of Janata could provide a competent vehicle for realising his vision of total revolution

He took the risk in the belief that the baptism of struggle would cleanse all dross and turn those men into genuine revolutionaries. Jayaprakash had no party, organised, disciplined and ideologically committed, that could lead his movement, control it and keep it on the right track. Perhaps he figured that the participants in his struggle—they were mostly students and youths—constituted, as Régis Debray put it, "the people's army" which could be "the nucleus of" his "party, and not vice versa."³⁷¹

It seemed that while putting society on trial he acted like a man who started a fire without making any fire-fighting arrangement and eventually found to his regret that it just could not be extinguished. Jayaprakash did not have any political party he could count on to put out the fire when necessary.

There was another side to this. When it came to picking a prime minister extraneous forces and factors, not quite enamoured of Jayaprakash's philosophy of politics, seemed to have exerted an influence on him. It may be recollected that of the two candidates for this post Jagjivan Ram reportedly enjoyed the confidence of the Birlas,

³⁷⁰Quoted in K R Sundar Rajan, "Janata Party's Death Wish," *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 22 September 1978

³⁷¹Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?* Pelican Books, 1968, p 115

whereas Morarji Desai was said to have attracted the notice of Ramnath Goenka. And Goenka, though he had a lower rating than the Birlas in the business of money-making, could rightly claim that Jayaprakash held him in affection.

That Desai was Jayaprakash's choice for prime minister is past doubt. In fact Jayaprakash is on record with the statement: "That was a good choice and I take pride for making that choice, because that choice was given to me, and I felt it was good to choose Morarjibhai to lead the country."³⁷²

On the other hand Jagjivan Ram also seemed to have been encouraged to believe that he would be Janata's choice for prime minister. At any rate the statement George Fernandes,³⁷³ Janata's stormy petrel, issued immediately after Desai was selected to lead a Janata government would suggest no less.

Like many other socialists Fernandes felt that Jagjivan Ram should be drafted for the office of prime minister. Referring obviously to the ranging controversy on the issue, Fernandes emphasised that "plighted words should not be broken and democratic processes should not be sacrificed in an effort to create what is termed as consensus but what amounts to foisting the point of view of a group."³⁷⁴ Was Jayaprakash in the dark about it

Whatever might have turned the scale in favour of Desai, Jayaprakash certainly was no unaware that Desai's mind had frozen in its tracks a long time before, that he was the spokesman for the obdurately conservative forces in Janata. Nor could Jayaprakash justifiably plead ignorance of the fact that Desai seldom made any effort, unless forced by circumstances, to hide his less than admiration for him. Still, it was Jayaprakash who enabled Desai to reach the top of the ladder. That was not a little intriguing, other things apart.

³⁷²Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 22 August 1977

³⁷³He was a cabinet minister in the Janata government

³⁷⁴Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 25 March 1977

The promise was that the style and content of politics would be changed, that it would be taken to the people so that their direct participation in decision-making might be ensured. But this remained a far cry. What is more, Jayaprakash had to watch helplessly the disintegration of Janata which was pledged to let the thwarted socioeconomic revolution run its course.

A time came when he could not restrain himself from airing his agony at the way the Janata experiment was being destroyed. But the ailing and lonely Jayaprakash could do nothing to reverse the process except recording his grief: "Janata was part of my being, and this was on account of my deep emotional involvement in the historical process which led to its formation. It is against this background that I have been watching with deep anguish and pains the growing disunity in the ranks of the party and the way it is functioning." He was constrained to admit that "there is a collective failure to give the party a vigorous and vibrant image and make it play an historically adequate role."³⁷⁵

None but the eyeless would deny that Jayaprakash was perhaps the saddest Indian at that point. One of contemporary India's most eulogised and at the same time controversial characters he came close to giving a new turn to Indian politics twice in his life. On both occasions he left the scene even as it seemed success was within his reach—once immediately after the death of Nehru and again when Janata triumphed at the polls. This imparted poignancy to his cry, as he realised that his time was drawing near, "I am lying on the sickbed as a dumb spectator to what is going on."³⁷⁶ The goings-on on the country's political stage were a denial of the values and principles that were supposed to have been the basic ingredients of Jayaprakash's philosophy of life and politics.

All his pleadings and admonitions went unheeded. The promised revolution remained a mirage, people's power or

³⁷⁶*Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 27 December 1978

³⁷⁵*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 21 June 1978

lokshakti, people's politics or *lokniti* could never be made to run in harness. On the contrary, there was the sad spectacle of the forces of disharmony and destabilisation battering whatever he had tried to build on the basis of his philosophy of life and politics.

As C G K Reddy, a lifelong socialist and a committed supporter of the JP movement, observed on the basis of his achievement auditing of the Janata government's first 15 months in office: "Both the party and the government are riven by serious personal conflicts.... Politics of power, instead of politics of principle and programme, is in clear evidence.... The Janata government appears keen on the establishment of an all-time record in the number of people killed by the police for 'the maintenance of law and order...' There is no policy and no discernible direction. Instead, people are being fed on slogans.... Human life continues to be cheap. Arbitrariness abounds."³⁷⁷

It surely was not intended to be a message of hope and reassurance when a person like J B Kripalani, a staunch Gandhian and one of Jayaprakash's most intimate colleagues, adjudged the concept of total revolution as opposed to the Gandhian philosophy. In the eyes of Kripalani the concept of total revolution "was not a Gandhian concept." The whole idea was "imported" from China, where the communists were determined to liquidate the old regime. "The Mahatma," Kripalani observed, "stood for a comprehensive revolution and Jayaprakash was not above him."³⁷⁸ It was then that Jayaprakash's world was a complete shambles and not in June 1975 as he ruefully stated in *Prison Diary*.

How does one explain this whimpering end of a movement that derailed the Indian polity so that it could lay the foundations of the ideal society? The answer was not far to seek, the critics said, and they pointed an accusing finger at Jayaprakash.

³⁷⁷C G K Reddy, "Janata has been a total failure," *Sunday*, Vol 6, No 18, 16 July 1978, p 22, 25

³⁷⁸*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 17 October 1977

As a critic put it, setting out on his political career in the early 1930s as a revolutionary Marxist, Jayaprakash Narayan wound up as a petty bourgeois reformist espousing the mystique of Gandhism. While striving to create an image of himself as being above or outside politics, he constantly sought to manipulate the political process in India in the Gandhian direction. And his 'total revolution' was no more than an instrument for maintaining the 'national' hegemony of the bourgeoisie. It was a revolution from which he sought to exclude the Indian worker and small peasant and landless labourer. *Bhoodan*, and the other *dans* he promoted, were designed to derail the Indian revolution and divert workers and peasants from genuine revolutionary action which would have ended the oligarchic rule of the possessing classes.

Another opinion on the man and his struggle is: "If we examine [Jayaprakash] Narayan's *sarvodaya* philosophy, his halting efforts at socioeconomic reforms, the class base of his movement and its organisational cadre, and his relations with the opposition parties, the conclusion seems inescapable that the movement for total revolution would not have, either in the short or in the long run, responded effectively to the developmental needs of the poor. Far from being revolutionary—despite the rhetoric—the movement was essentially conservative. His 'people's' or 'voluntary socialism' (as he had once referred to the *sarvodaya* philosophy), his weak socioeconomic programme, and his political agitation played into the hands of the conservative political parties and the upper and middle-upper classes."³⁷⁹

Even if this is dismissed, as indeed many would dismiss it, as a biased assessment of a man whose multifaceted life and struggle could not be reduced to fit hackneyed theories and concepts, certain basic points need must be clarified. For the sake of argument it may be assumed that Jayaprakash did not sail under false colours, that the objective conditions in the country in the early 1970s were ripe for

³⁷⁹Marry C Carras, *op cit*, p 187

raising the standard of revolt. But did Jayaprakash have a political instrument, ideology and programme to make a revolution? Again, if the assumption is that the sequence of events ranging from emergency to the emergence of Janata as the ruling party signified completion in part of Jayaprakash's struggle—at any rate that was his claim—what was being done at the level of sociopolitical engineering to consummate it?

A revolution, it is common knowledge, is not made for the pleasure of it. A revolution is made to replace the rejected sociopolitical structure by what would be capable of working the ideals and objectives of the revolution. In the present instance nothing got done to that effect and the same old exploitative and discredited socioeconomic system remained intact.

In point of fact, what came to be known as the JP movement could not by any stretch of the imagination pass for a revolution. Even Jayaprakash did not think so. The very concept of total revolution was full of contradictions. Other things apart, its goal had never been logically spelt out, and the theoretical-methodical questions involved were conveniently left to be sorted out when the need arose. The truth is that the term total revolution was a slogan that could be put to a variety of uses, depending on what exactly one intended to achieve at a given point.

If Jayaprakash knew what he was talking about, "total revolution is not a dogma but an attitude to life. It is not a revolution in the sense of a sudden change but it is a deep and comprehensive change in individuals and society." The word total had been used, he further explained, "to mean a comprehensive revolution affecting all aspects of social life, including individual life." To keep all his options open he stressed that "the specific nature of a total revolution at any particular time would be governed or determined by the needs of the time, the situation that obtained in the country and forces that were contending for power."

The most intriguing aspect of it was that "at different times a total revolution might take different forms, even different meanings in the sense that its content might also

be different."³⁸⁰ Was this a deliberate attempt to clothe an incoherent idea in rhetoric so that it would admit of as many interpretations as might be desired? Or could it be that he was unaware that his conception of total revolution lacked logic and consistency?

The point is, whatever might have been Jayaprakash's distant goal his immediate objective was to "break Congress monopoly of power," more specifically dislodge Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from office. He also admitted that his struggle was against her. This indeed was the most important aspect of his scheme of politics in the given context. In an interview published in *Sunday* of 6 April 1975 Jayaprakash confessed that he had been "encouraging sympathetic elements within Congress ... to restore democracy within Congress, which is possible by challenging the absolute leadership of Mrs Indira Gandhi."

The focus was being turned on her "because," Jayaprakash observed, "Mrs Gandhi is the fountain-head of all authoritarianism of the ruling Congress. She, as a single individual, can put to shame some of the greatest autocrats of history. I can see the threat to democracy personified in her."³⁸¹ His battle was also against corruption, which had crossed the farthest limit of tolerance. He was of the opinion that the politician, ruling or opposition, was corrupt, the bureaucrat was corrupt, in fact, no segment of society was left out of the ambit of corruption.

Jayaprakash was convinced that "the Congress governments, wherever faced with a people's charter of demands, never found it possible to adopt the path of cooperation" because of "the corruption among Congress Ministers." But the most damaging aspect was that "Mrs Gandhi's own conduct in collecting crores of rupees from rich businessmen for party and election management is a piece of political corruption that has completely destroyed the

³⁸⁰"Total Revolution. Some Clarifications" (Jayaprakash Narayan's interview with Brahmanand), *Towards Total Revolution*; Vol 4, *op cit*, p 197

³⁸¹"Total Revolution Explained," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 4, *op cit*, p 142. Also see *Sunday*, 6 April 1975

moral susceptibilities of most power-seeking Congressmen." Therefore, "corruption has been the central point of the movement, particularly corruption in the government and the administration."³⁸²

The second of the two key objectives of the movement, may be taken up first for closer scrutiny. His concern at the growing volume of corruption in every sphere of life would cause no eyebrows to be raised. His interest in the problem of corruption, both economic and political, was not of recent origin. This had engaged his attention even before the country became independent.

A member of the Congress Working Committee in 1946-47, he submitted a report on "Evils of Corruption" to it for consideration. The report, among other things, said: "First, there is corruption in Congress elections and in other things connected with the control of the Congress organisation. Second, there is corruption involving bribery and similar practices. The second type of corruption has grown by leaps and bounds since the formation of the Congress ministries."³⁸³

Since then Jayaprakash had often touched on this theme so that the powers that be might be activated to give thought to it. But nothing got done and the situation was allowed to go from bad to worse instead, he complained. Raising the question, "Why I am taking up corruption in the political and administrative spheres first?", at the time of the Bihar movement, he said he was doing so "because the roots lie there. All aspects of the lives of the people have been corrupted by this source."³⁸⁴

This could not be disputed. It is just that while accusing Congress and its leader as the source of all corruption in the country, he seemed to have forgotten to examine his own surroundings. That corruption was all-pervasive and that no segment of society, not even his own, could

³⁸²Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, *Op cit*, pp 51, 110

³⁸³Jayaprakash Narayan, "Evils of Corruption," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 2, *Op cit*, p 68

³⁸⁴Jayaprakash Narayan, *Total Revolution*, Sarva Seva Prakashan, Varanasi, 1975, p 24

claim to have remained free from its infectious touch was apparently overlooked.

Take, for instance, the Gujarat movement. According to Jayaprakash, the struggle in Gujarat "started with a demand for the resignation of the then Chief Minister, Shri Chimanbhai Patel." But it was not to satisfy somebody's whim that Patel's exit from office was urged. As a matter of fact, Jayaprakash observed, "in Gujarat corruption was the issue."³⁸⁵ Patel's resignation was demanded because as Chief Minister he was allegedly responsible for it and eventually he had to quit.

Everyman's observed editorially: "Mr Chimanbhai Patel ... rose to chief minister's office in Gujarat on piles of black money. And he needed pools of blood to wade through out of it. There is no evidence in his utterances since that any of these sits heavy on his conscience."³⁸⁶ Subsequently Patel joined Janata and became one of its leaders. The supposedly corrupt Congress chief minister had only to cross the floor to be consecrated a leader of the people. Indira Gandhi had a point when she said: "If a person were with us, they [opposition] would say he was corrupt. But if that person left the party, then he would become clean, according to them."³⁸⁷

It would doubtless be hard to explain away, much less defend, this. Recall, again, Jayaprakash's earlier observation: "I do not know if there is a single party in this country that is free from the evils of corruption and nepotism. ... Is there a party that can lay its hand on its breast and assert that it harbours no corruption, does not engage in malpractices at elections or does not receive black money? Only it may be coming in larger quantities to the party in power and in less amounts to the others."³⁸⁸

That was a candid statement. It revealed a man who could stick his neck out for the sake of the truth. It was

³⁸⁵*Ibid*, pp 14, 27

³⁸⁶*Everyman's*, 16 February 1974, p 2

³⁸⁷*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 11 August 1975

³⁸⁸Jayaprakash Narayan, *Total Revolution*, *op cit*, pp 46-4.

only to be expected of a man like Jayaprakash that he would own up that he was not quite unaffected by this. Other instances apart, the publication of *Everyman's* was possible because Ramnath Goenka, the owner of the *Indian Express*, had been benevolent enough to guarantee it.

As Carras put it, "According to the editor of *Everyman's* (Ajit Bhattacharjea, Narayan's admiring biographer), 'The *Indian Express* prints *Everyman's Weekly* under some sort of license arrangement under which the printing and publication of *Everyman's Weekly* is financed by Goenka who owns the *Indian Express*. There are also some common personnel between the two newspapers.' "

There is something more to it than just this. If Carras is not unaware of what she is talking about "Goenka was under indictment for corruption on several charges under [Indira] Gandhi's government, and even when the new Janata government came into power, the charges were reportedly pursued, although nothing has come of them."³⁸⁹ Is there any reason to suppose even for a minute that Jayaprakash was not in the know of it? Or that he believed what was sauce for the goose was not sauce for the gander.

According to Jayaprakash, the Congress Party, a few Congressmen excepted, was steeped in corruption. There is no reason to believe that Devkant Barooah, then president of Congress, did not come within the purview of this. Rather, Barooah was supposed to be one of the worst offenders. Jayaprakash called him a "court jester."³⁹⁰

In an entry on 21 September 1975 in *Prison Diary* he characterised Barooah as "Mrs Gandhi's wonder boy." Now it must have been clear to Jayaprakash that Barooah did not become an evil person overnight. Yet Jayaprakash felt no qualms about writing a personal letter, on 1 April 1974, to Barooah, then Central Cabinet Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, introducing his younger brother

³⁸⁹Mary C Carras, *op cit*, p 202

³⁹⁰Jayaprakash Narayan, "No Compromise," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 4, *op cit*, pp 103-109

Raja.³⁹¹ The letter confirmed that he had also written to Barooah earlier about Raja.

Every word Jayaprakash had spoken about the opposition parties being entangled in the meshes of corruption was true, and the logic of this required he should at least have kept his distance. But that was not to be. Abandoning his 20-year-old stance that the party system and parliamentary democracy were an unmixed curse and in disregard of his contention that the opposition parties, rightist, leftist or centrist, were no less guilty of corruption than Congress, Jayaprakash welcomed their support to his movement. The one exception was CPI, "who are stooges of Soviet Russia."³⁹²

In defence of his changed stance he said: "If the movement had been confined to the *sarvodaya* workers alone and its principle was to keep away all political parties ... it would have been possible to keep them away. But then there would have been no people's movement." Raising the question whether "the participation of opposition parties were an unmixed evil," he said that his "unhesitating answer is no." For one thing, "it lends strength to the movement." For another — this was "more important" — the alchemy of struggle would remove all impurities and the parties would "undergo a seachange."

Such a development might not take place "in a state where there is no strong non-party leadership in the movement." But not so "in Bihar" where, Jayaprakash contended, "it has happened." Not only that, "all the parties involved are committed to the aims of total revolution and to the dynamics of change: struggle."³⁹³ That this attitude smacked of expediency, if not opportunism, was much too obvious to be debated.

Subsequent developments not only confirmed this but also indicated that political morality, the ethics of political

³⁹¹See Appendix A8 for copy of Jayaprakash Narayan's letter of 1 April 1974 to Devkant Barooah, the original of which is with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

³⁹²Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, *op cit*, p 119

³⁹³*Ibid.*, pp 66-69

conduct, and the like were fair-weather expressions. The elaborate argument apparently was only part of the exercise to meet the exigencies of the times. The question of charting a new course of politics, of initiating a process for the future regarding socioeconomic change through a people's movement on the basis of principled politics remained a pious wish.

The removal of Indira Gandhi from power was the movement's prime objective. For she symbolised the forces set upon destroying the democratic fabric of society, Jayaprakash said. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's predilection for authoritarianism was of course no recent development, he asserted. He had in fact "always believed that Mrs Gandhi had no faith in democracy, that she was by inclination and conviction a dictator. My belief has tragically turned out to be true," Jayaprakash recorded in an entry, dated 22 July 1975, in *Prison Diary*.

In another entry on 28 August 1975, Jayaprakash said: "From all that she has been doing since 1971 at least, it appears that she is afraid of democracy because then she is not sure if she would remain in power."³⁹⁴ Which of the two entries is one to go by? Datewise, the earlier one is a definitive statement that Indira Gandhi and authoritarianism were two sides of the same coin, while the subsequent one implies that she had not jettisoned democracy till 1971.

On the strength of Jayaprakash's statement in another context as well as his correspondence (already mentioned) with Indira Gandhi, it would appear that he had no occasion to doubt her democratic credentials. For instance, he is on record with the statement that "when we [Jayaprakash and his wife] went on a world tour for Bangladesh [in 1971] ... almost everywhere we were guests, thanks to advice from the Prime Minister [Indira Gandhi], to our ambassadors and high commissioners."³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴*Ibid*, pp 13, 48

³⁹⁵Jayaprakash Narayan, "To the Detractors," *Everyman's*, 13 October 1973, p 16.

It is quite likely that Jayaprakash would not have accepted this hospitality if he were convinced that Indira Gandhi and democracy were opposites. Nor would he have gone to the extent that he did to establish rapport with her. Or agree, as late as in June 1974, to the suggestion of Chandra Shekhar, then a leading member of the Congress Working Committee, that there should be a reconciliation between him and Indira Gandhi.

As Chandra Shekhar said in a taped interview (already mentioned) on 2 August 1980, "In May 1974 JP was operated upon for enlarged prostate at Vellore and I went there to see JP. At that time he was not very well and still he wanted to discuss something with me. The doctors told me that it was not advisable then to have prolonged talks with JP. So I proposed JP that I would be returning next week to see him. He was very keen and thought that perhaps I was trying to avoid discussing things with him. I said no, I would be returning to Vellore only after seven days.

"Next Saturday or Sunday I again went to Vellore. Before going to Vellore I had a talk with Mrs Gandhi. I told her that 'I did not know what JP would talk with me but he had indicated his desire to discuss something with me. However, we should try to do something and that some reconciliation is possible. What is your attitude, I want to know?' To be fair to Mrs Gandhi, she told me that she wanted some reconciliation with JP and she also told me that I should discuss it.

"I told her that it was very essential that something should be done and she was also very eager that something should be done. I went there [Vellore], I had a talk with JP and he was also quite responsive. After that I came back and again I had a long talk with Mrs Gandhi. She wanted to know what happened and I told her everything because JP's response was very positive. Mrs Gandhi asked me what was to be done. I said, 'Why should you not write a letter to Jayaprakashji?'

"I want to remind you of one thing. Before this Mrs Gandhi had issued a statement in Bhuvaneshwar question-

ing the integrity and honesty of Jayaprakash Narayan, that he takes money from the rich people. I told her that 'it was a very unfortunate statement, you should not have made it.' JP felt very sore about it and also made a public statement. So I said that Mrs Gandhi should write to JP. Mrs Gandhi wrote a letter to JP and that was a quite good letter.³⁹⁶ She herself did not say anything about that statement, but Uma Shankar Dikshit made a statement [mentioned earlier] eulogising JP as a great patriot, a very sincere and honest man who was a father-figure in Indian politics.

"I thought that was the beginning, but unfortunately what happened was that some people round JP at the time did not want that. It is not only that persons round about Mrs Gandhi did not want that but there were persons round about JP also who did not want that there should be any reconciliation between Mrs Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan. They said that she made the statement against you and the clarification has come from Uma Shankar Dikshit. It is not proper for you to accept this.'

"The so-called Congress Left here in Delhi, who were out to create a schism between JP and Mrs Gandhi, also asked her why she should try for a reconciliation with Jayaprakash Narayan. His movement was fizzling out, there was nothing in the movement and she should do nothing. When I came to know these things I wrote a letter to JP and another letter to Mrs Gandhi, perhaps on 10 June 1974.

"In those letters I wrote very bluntly that persons around you people [that is, Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi] don't want any reconciliation. I wrote to JP that 'you are trying to fight such forces which are trying to create greater difference between you and Mrs Gandhi and, perhaps, by your action you may be helping these forces to take over the whole thing.'

³⁹⁶See Appendix A9 for copy of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's letters of 22 April and 22 May 1974 to Jayaprakash Narayan; the originals of which are with Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

"That is how things happened. After that there were many occasions when this matter came up for discussion in the Working Committee or in various other forums of the Congress Party. All the time I did not agree with all that JP was saying; I did not agree with the whole philosophy of JP's attitude towards the problems of the country.

"But I was convinced of one thing, that JP was doing it sincerely, honestly and was trying to do it in the best interest of the country. This is why I said time and again that there should be some reconciliation between JP and Mrs Gandhi ... I thought that perhaps a situation may be there in which if JP and Mrs Gandhi both try to work together, then there may be some hope for the future of this country. Unfortunately, I did not succeed."³⁹⁷

No useful purpose would be served if it is denied that Indira Gandhi was neither beloved of all nor forsaken of God and man, that her regime was not an etching in futility throughout. Or run away with the idea that she and democracy were polar opposites, that she was basically authoritarian. With some justification it could be argued that in the years between her assumption of office and the liberation of Bangladesh Indira Gandhi seldom failed to rise to the occasion.

She had the situation under control, and she could initiate moves with a view to serving the people's interest, within limits. In fact, after the 1969 split in Congress she ran a minority government that could have been voted out of office any day the opposition parties desired. Not only did they not do so but, more significant, they supported her almost on every crucial issue.

This they did because they were afraid that Indira Gandhi's exit from office would inevitably clear the way for conservative forces to take over. Further, she initiated a series of political and economic measures which did not deserve to be laughed away as gimmicks. The liberation of Bangladesh should also be mentioned. Much as it would

³⁹⁷ Author-Chandra Shekhar taped interview, 2 August 1980

be idle speculation to interpret these measures as a decisive turn to the left, yet she invited the wrath of powerful segments of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, she hurt but failed to fester a whole range of obscurantist-conservative forces. It was only to be expected that they would not turn their toes in, wishing her godspeed.

Externally, Indira Gandhi had incurred the wrath of, other countries besides, the US as much for her role in the Bangladesh liberation war as for the Pokhran implosion in 1974. These were neither forgiven nor forgotten. Add to this the severe economic crisis that overtook the country in 1972 and which continued well into 1975, the Gujarat election defeat, the adverse Allahabad High Court judgment her frantic efforts to secure herself against every challenge, such as the JP movement, the increasing exercise of unbridled power and the picture would be about complete. Indira Gandhi had angered a good few and pleased none.

As Jayaprakash's movement gained momentum the Prime Minister of India retreated until she found herself in a blind alley, the way out of which nothing but the emergency promised. Or so Indira Gandhi imagined. She vainly tried to combat the challenge with a patently wrong tool, which the emergency was. There might have been a way out if both Jayaprakash and Indira Gandhi had between them agreed to observe the basic rules of what they were professedly trying to protect—democracy.

Indira Gandhi saw danger where none existed. Her judgment got warped and she had a distorted perspective of Jayaprakash's true intention. Were she dispassionate enough to see things in their right perspective she would have understood that Jayaprakash was incapable of contending for power, and that the grant of what he had been asking for would have only strengthened her. She failed to see that Jayaprakash had not really set up the standard of revolt, no matter what his rhetoric during the Bihar movement might suggest, and that he would have gladly agreed to an honourable end to the movement.

It was not until she had closed all Jayaprakash's options

except direct confrontation that the situation went over the brink. If Jayaprakash had set himself a task that was not achievable in his lifetime, Indira Gandhi had in the course of time come to believe that her political interests and those of the nation were identical in every detail. For all her finesse in tactical manoeuvres and short-term management of men and affairs, Indira Gandhi failed to appreciate that Jayaprakash had hitched his wagon to a star, notwithstanding his rushing into the field of *real politik* in the 1970s.

Why was the emergency declared? Was it the only option the regime had in order to grasp the nettle, assuming that the problems the country faced were intractable and the opposition was causing the wreck of democracy as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi alleged in her broadcast to the nation immediately after a state of emergency was declared on 26 June 1975 morning.³⁹⁸ Admittedly, the country was confronted with a severe crisis, both economic and political. But to arraign the opposition exclusively for having engineered it cannot be supported by facts. Whatever opposition existed in the country was insignificant, irreconcilably fragmented and without competent leadership.

The crisis was the cumulative effect partly of the legacy the preceding regimes had handed down and partly of the Indira Gandhi government's failure to tackle the post-1972 situation. The opposition, for that matter the JP movement, only added fuel to the flames. Measures other than resort to emergency rule to deal with the crisis were available, depending of course on the nature of the regime's ultimate objective. The emergency was indeed counter-productive.

But then, what were the reasons for Jayaprakash's acting the way he did? Was he not aware of the risks involved? The search for an answer might perhaps be facilitated if we recollected the sociopolitical scene at that time. At once the world's second most populous nation and its largest democracy, India granted its citizens every right to

³⁹⁸See *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 27 June 1975

determine the nature and character of the polity. The Indian Constitution guaranteed these basic rights of the citizens, irrespective of their caste, community or religion.

The statute book contained such radical provisions as few other countries could excel. If the constitution was there to affirm that the country owned the Declaration of the Rights of Man the realities of life apparently would also confirm this. There was universal adult suffrage and the government derived its sanction from the people. Freedom of association, speech and assembly was assured, so was the rule of law.

Over the years the mechanism of a democratic political system had been assembled from scratch. This had been done not because there was no alternative or that it was the easiest thing to do. The option for democracy was a conscious and deliberate act.

The question however arose: Did democracy function all these years productively enough to support the contention that it had struck root. Did it come anywhere near achieving the objective Indian society had set itself. In other words, could it be said that it had been able to fulfil the promise of assuring every Indian "a certain satisfaction of the essential economic needs, which will release him from continuous oppression and which will give him a chance to develop his creative faculties."³⁹⁹

The answer was in the negative, there being a wide gap between reality and the promised "human and social revolution" that would have radically transformed a traditional society and an underdeveloped economy. There was a deep feeling of despondency all around. Only a rare Indian would dispute that the country was passing through hard times, both politically and economically.

Amartya Sen, then Professor of Economics, London School of Economics, after recalling Prasanta Chandra

³⁹⁹Jawaharlal Nehru, *Address to Seminar on Parliamentary Democracy*, New Delhi, 25 February 1957

Mahalanobis's⁴⁰⁰ observation at the second All-India Labour Economics Conference at Agra on 1 January 1959 that "to try to get rid of the fear of unemployment in ten years—this is the crucial issue in India," said in the course of his convocation address to the Indian Statistical Institute in December 1973: "The Draft Fifth Five-Year Plan for 1974-79, which has just been presented to the nation as a radical approach to planning in India, is characterised among other things by saying less on employment than any previous five-year plan. Indeed the section on employment in the chapter on Employment, Manpower and Labour Welfare evades the main problem so systematically after paying a handsome tribute to the importance of it, that it reads almost like a piece of black humour."⁴⁰¹

The agonising poverty of the multitude and the repulsively ostentatious wealth of a minuscule segment of society were the most striking features of the nation's economic life. The lapse of two and a half decades since the country became free had made little dent in the age-old problem of poverty. Even the then Union Minister of State for Planning admitted that two-thirds of Indians lived below the poverty line.

At another level, the pulse of the nation did not beat as systematically as might be wished. Even a casual scan of the political horizon would reveal that the democratic experiment was up against obstinate hurdles, not all of which could be dismissed as just incidental. An increasing mood of intolerance, proclivity towards encouraging regionalism, the politics of caste and of regionalism, preference for coercive methods, pervasive corruption and a re-

⁴⁰⁰Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis was Fellow of the Royal Society, founder of the Indian Statistical Institute, pioneer of statistics teaching, research and use in India, member of the Planning Commission and honorary Statistical Adviser to the Government of India

⁴⁰¹Amartya Sen; *Dimensions of Unemployment in India*; convocation address, Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, December 1973, pp 1-2

morselessly callous bureaucracy were but some of the hazards that impeded the democratic process. All these were but symptoms of a deeprooted malady that was wearing down society.

Indian society lacked most of the basic elements that could sustain the democratic process. A particularly complicating dimension was added to the state of affairs by the non-existence, or nearly so, of a meaningful opposition the need for which in a democracy could not be overstated. There was little that could pass for an effective opposition, whether at the centre or in the constituent units.

Quite often the powers that be would equate dissent with subversion and denounce protest as a manifestation of "anti-national conspiracy." Conversely, irrelevant as the opposition was because of, other things apart, its shrivelling bulk and splintered ranks, it seldom could afford to act responsibly, much less purposively. Jayaprakash could not be said to have been unaffected by this. It did affect him, and more deeply than most other critics of the Indira Gandhi regime.

His assessment of the situation was that "the country is heading for a downfall, not only moral but also the economic, social and cultural degradation of at least 40 percent of the Indian people who live below the poverty line. One is reminded here of a statement of Bapu[Gandhi] who, while defining democracy, had said that it did not only mean a government established by the people's vote; it also meant that the people had the power to oust their rulers when found unworthy to rule." Jayaprakash was convinced that "democracy has almost ceased to exist in India. The pyramid of the political structure still stands on its apex."⁴⁰²

The wrongs must be righted and the political structure must not be allowed to continue to stand upside down. This was a challenge that put Jayaprakash to the test. To get to grips with it he tried several alternatives, none of

⁴⁰²Jayaprakash Narayan; *Prison Diary*; op cit, p 92

which seemed to work. He had set great store by his concept of consensus politics and, on the basis of it, he repeatedly attempted to build a bridge to Indira Gandhi. That did not succeed, largely because neither the ruling party nor the opposition was in the mood for trying out offbeat ideas.

The situation continued to deteriorate and popular demands for meaningful change grew steadily louder. The matter in dispute apparently was the nature and quantum of change required and the methods to be adopted to bring it about. Of the two major points of view regarding this one was that, given goodwill and cooperation, the desired change could be effected within the existing political framework. The other view emphasised that no worthwhile change could be initiated until the framework was dismantled completely. It was asserted that society must be put in the crucible of total revolution if it were to become relatively livable. These two contrary views clashed, and the issue was taken to the streets.

There is no blinking the fact that Jayaprakash was in a hurry to win the day. As was to be expected of a man in haste, he made compromises all along, beat successive retreats from his committed path and allowed immediate interest to take precedence over the long-term objective. He had apparently forgotten his own fiat that "for a non-violent social order a new individual and social morality, a set of values, on the one hand, and a new type of political and economic organisation of society, on the other, are needed."⁴⁰³

One expedient action led to another until they snowballed, virtually strangulating the movement that was supposed to herald the dawn of the promised new society. As he observed when he had become a burden to the men who had him to get into the corridors of power: "The Bihar movement in 1974-75...though aimed to bring about radical changes in society, or total revolution as I call it,

⁴⁰³Jayaprakash Narayan, "Critique of Second Plan," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *op cit*, p 76

later assumed the shape of a political struggle against the totalitarian attitudes and policies of the Congress regime under Mrs Indira Gandhi. The movement indeed succeeded in scoring a victory on the political front, but it has yet to make any dent in the social system that continues to be as oppressive and exploitative as ever."⁴⁰⁴

All his efforts thereafter to reason the Janata Party onto the desired course of action were in vain. Except a few such as Chandra Shekhar, none in Janata would agree to concede Jayaprakash the right to claim its promise to the people. They could get away with this for the simple reason that Jayaprakash was the leader of a party born of a marriage of convenience. Faithful to its own scheme of politics, each constituent unit of Janata respected his writ only to the extent it served its interest.

Jayaprakash was the leader of Janata on sufferance. It is also true that Janata was far from the kind of instrument for change he needed. As for the so-called student-youth struggle committees, they were just so many collections of adolescents who could hardly be relied upon to work his will. When sectarian politics and bitter infighting had immobilised Janata, Prime Minister Desai superciliously rejected the suggestion that Jayaprakash and Kripalani be approached to mediate a settlement. Desai said: "We ourselves have to think about basic principles of administration and of conducting the affairs of a political party. It is not possible to take the help of Jayaprakashji and Kripalaniji every time."⁴⁰⁵

At the most challenging moment of his life Jayaprakash did not have a party that agreed with him on the basic issues of ideology, programme and methods. Whom could Jayaprakash blame for this other than himself? To clarify

⁴⁰⁴Jayaprakash Narayan said this in his Foreword to *The Social and Political Philosophy of Sarvodaya* by Archana Sinha, Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 1978

⁴⁰⁵*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 1 August 1978

the point reference might be made to what Rajkrishna⁴⁰⁶ observed in the course of a conversation with me in July 1978. After the achievement of freedom both Jayaprakash and Lohia had tried to create an alternative power centre to Congress. Lohia's political line was spade or constructive work; prison or building mass power through struggle and agitation; and vote or contesting election, emphasis being on the second item of activities. In the initial stages, particularly after the first general election in 1952, Jayaprakash was somewhat lukewarm to prison and vote, his emphasis being on constructive work. As early as 1953 he had indicated his preference for building a movement rather than a party.

A party, according to him, was essentially an instrument for fighting elections and capturing state power, whereas a movement went beyond this. It aimed at a much larger objective than capture of state power, just as a revolutionary movement went well beyond a revolution. A movement could not be built without rousing the people, the political sovereign. Addressing the Bombay City PSP's first annual conference on 27 December 1953, Jayaprakash said: "Gandhism does not concentrate on the capture of power, nor depend on the power of the state. It goes direct to the people and helps them effect the revolution in their lives."⁴⁰⁷

In the fourth general election in 1967 Lohia applied himself to creating an electoral alliance with other opposition parties, including the Jana Sangh (Jayaprakash was still critical of the Jana Sangh). This was done with a view to offering a national alternative to Congress, but Jayaprakash was not very enthusiastic. To a certain extent Lohia succeeded in creating an alternative to Congress in the 1967 election at the state level. But ten years later, in the March 1977 general election, Jayaprakash

⁴⁰⁶An academic and a socialist by choice; Rajkrishna was a long-time friend of Jayaprakash Narayan. He was a member of the Planning Commission under Janata rule.

⁴⁰⁷Jayaprakash Narayan, "A plea for Gandhism," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *op cit*, p 161

wholeheartedly involved himself in rigging up a mass platform comprising the opposition parties, not excluding the Jana Sangh. He seemed to have realised that a party was essential for capturing state power, without which his programme could not be implemented, that unless the emphasis was at once on total "non-Congressism" and opposition unity on its basis, Congress could not be dislodged from power, nor an alternative power source created.

This would explain Jayaprakash's eagerness to accord respectability to all and sundry, including those who stood at either extreme of the political spectrum. With a ten-year timelag Jayaprakash could be said to have returned to Lohia's line. The difference between the two approaches was that Lohia's was part of a logically consistent ideology, programme and method, while Jayaprakash's was largely determined by extraneous factors. The success he achieved in creating an alternative to Congress at the national level was no more enduring than an Indian summer. The construction caved in at the first hint of trouble.

Another side of the picture was that Jayaprakash's perception of the reality was often tinged with subjective impressions. In the early 1970s his assessment of men and events convinced him that a revolutionary situation obtained in the country—so much so that he told a students' meeting in Kanpur on 3 February 1974 that "another 1942 movement is in sight to change the course of history."⁴⁰⁸ He took it for granted that the people prepared to follow his lead if he asked them to. He did this and the struggle was supposed to have entered its last phase on 25 June 1975, when emergency was imposed.

But what really happened? A disillusioned Jayaprakash admitted later that he had got hold of the wrong end of the stick. He did not realise when he issued the call for struggle that, as he said in an interview on 27 June 1976, "the people are still ignorant of and unconcerned about their rights and duties as citizens of an indepen-

⁴⁰⁸ *Everyman's*, 23 February 1974, p 1

dent and democratic country. A rather glaring proof of this was their complete passivity when their fundamental rights of speech, association, movement, etc., were suddenly taken away by Mrs Gandhi. "By way of substantiating his statement he said: "Had the people been conscious of their rights, in spite of the emergency there would have been countrywide protests and demonstrations."

At the same time he made a categorical statement minutes later in the course of that interview: "There was undoubtedly a revolutionary climate in the country last year (1974)" The situation however had changed and "the ferment has nearly died down by now." The reasons for which were, according to him, "unprecedented repression, proclamation of the emergency and somewhat easier economic conditions." It was really surprising that Jayaprakash should go on record with the statement that the "revolutionary climate" which obtained in 1974 vanished overnight as the economy started looking up. It never occurred to him that he was either wrong in his assessment of the objective conditions that prevailed at that time or the people just did not choose to respond to his call.

What else would explain his subsequent observation: "Perhaps there is something in our character, the character of the Indian people, that makes it easy for our rulers, even when they are democratically elected, to frighten us into submission. The supine manner in which the people, with few exceptions, reacted to Mrs Gandhi's draconian measures of the 26th June, 1975, and thereafter is a proof of this weakness in our character. The millions who used to crowd my meetings and shout brave slogans just seem to have disappeared. Even young men have been too cowed to react."⁴⁰⁹ Was this a sudden revelation? Or was this an effort to rationalise his failure to judge objectively men and events, his inabi-

⁴⁰⁹Jayaprakash Narayan-Brahmanand interview, 27 June 1976, "Total Revolution. Its Future," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 4, op cit, p 179, 186, 188

lity to get his message across to the people and do the necessary spadework before precipitating the country into an all-or nothing struggle.

But if the general direction of Jayaprakash's thought and action were followed, ignoring the aberrations, it would be seen that he did not at any point lose sight of the ultimate destination of his journey. All that he did throughout his life was aimed at, as he said in a taped interview to me about 15 months before his death, "building up mass consciousness and mass organisations at the grassroots level as far as possible. So that the people, who really are the basis of all this polity, are able to carve out their own lives, their own future.

"More active participation of the people is one way of doing it, but I should like to see something more than their participation, people themselves doing something rather than participating in somebody's action. Unfortunately, *lokshakti*, power of the people, has not yet been expressed in organisational forms. Sometimes in the form of a mass movement one sees it and then it moves society, changes are brought about, government's views are changed, but then it is a temporary affair. It stops there, it is not a continuing process. What I should like to see is a permanent revolution, revolutionary changes taking place all the time and being motivated by all the best that mankind has ever dreamt of."⁴¹⁰

This gives an idea of what motivated Jayaprakash, his yearning, his philosophy of politics. There was no neatly woven theory that could form its basis. He was no system builder, nor interested in the mechanics of power. In the ultimate analysis Jayaprakash's concept of politics aimed at restructuring society in a manner that would mirror his "Gandhian-humanist vision of the good society," as the editor put it in his introduction to *Prison Diary*.⁴¹¹ This no doubt is much too vague and may be

⁴¹⁰ Author-Jayaprakash taped interview, 6 July 1978 Also see *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Calcutta, 24 October 1978

⁴¹¹ Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, op cit, p 6

given several interpretations. But then Jayaprakash's world of thought was not unidimensional. He never made any attempt either to systematise his thoughts, ideas and principles.

The fact is, Jayaprakash, unlike Lohia, was not an original thinker. He commenced his journey as a socialist but midway abandoned socialism because it did not appear to have any "clarity of thought. Democratic socialism in the West has come to mean, in practice though not in theory, state socialism. And if it has any philosophy, it is that of *welfarism* from the top and not of a socialist way of life lived in every home and neighborhood...

"The old faith that state ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange *plus* planning will bring about socialism has been falsified. In its extreme form that faith led to Stalinism. But a new faith has not been created to take the place of the old. For this the socialists will have to go to pre-Marxian socialist idealists, the philosophical anarchists, to Tolstoy, Ruskin and Morris; to the post-Marxian social idealists; to Gandhi and Vinoba."⁴¹² Indeed Jayaprakash's socio-political thoughts and ideas carried the imprint of many—pre-scientific socialists; philosophical anarchists; Marx, Lenin and Trotsky; Tolstoy, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse;

Jayaprakash had, like Gandhi, ingrained suspicion of the state. This reflected his inclination to anarchism at the philosophical level. Presumably, it was intended to convey his own attitude towards the state when he referred to Gandhi's observation that "the state represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul but the state is a soulless machine it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence."⁴¹⁵ The organised state was an evil and it must therefore be demolished, he seemed to

⁴¹²Jayaprakash Narayan, *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity*, Akhil Bharat Sarva Sangh, Varanasi, 1959, pp 96-87

⁴¹³Quoted in Jayaprakash Narayan, "Gandhi and the Politics of Decentralisation," *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol 1, *Op cit*, p 213

suggest. From all these sources Jayaprakash culled fragments to weave them into his concept of total revolution. The end product however could not pass for an integrated whole.

Such being the case, it may perhaps be hard to avoid drawing the conclusion that compulsions of the socio-political reality at times prevailed on Jayaprakash to act against his better judgment. His continued emphasis of his allegiance to Gandhism notwithstanding, he did not seem to be convinced of the relevance of Gandhi's sociopolitical philosophy in the changed context. Much as he was wont to insist, particularly after independence, on adhering to the path of principled politics, he seemed to have been persuaded in the 1970s that lesser evil could be employed sometimes to defeat a greater evil. There were, nevertheless, indications that he had his doubts as to the wisdom of the methods he pursued at certain crucial points. It was not beyond his competence to appreciate that they involved the complex issue of ends and means and that the ideal he had set himself was hardly compatible with the political tools he conveniently used on occasion. This probably explained what induced him to observe that "the ideal never gets translated into practice without suffering deterioration."⁴¹⁴ The picture might have been entirely different, Indian politics might have taken a new course if Jayaprakash had stuck to his much professed commitment to Gandhian concept of politics.

All his shortcomings and faults notwithstanding, Jayaprakash's life was spent in search of what might lead to the creation of a just and egalitarian society where man would be the measure of everything. The Janata experiment might have disillusioned him, success might never have been for him to claim in his lifelong battle against whatever debases man or brutalises society, but he refused to throw in his hand or lose faith in the people. Even as he was at death's door he kept hope alive that the people would complete his unfinished task. Indeed he came

⁴¹⁴ Jayaprakash Narayan, *Prison Diary*, *op cit*, p 65

close to symbolising the Haldighati, if you like "the Thermopylae spirit" that, in the inimitable language of Lohia, "takes a long view and does not mind a succession of defeats. It does not believe that the world will end with the current generation. It believes that the ultimate source of strength and goodness lies in the power of the will."⁴¹⁵ Jayaprakash had this and in abundance.

⁴¹⁵Rammanohar Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, op cit, p 81

APPENDIX-A

NATIONAL FRONT
PUBLISHED EVERY SUNDAY
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(True copy)

Editor

P. C. Joshi

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Dated 8th September 1939

Dear J. P.

Yours of 10/8. I have been waiting in vain for the promised telegram and the letter "after L.C.C." And then I had to wait for Ajay to come back.

I am afraid I cannot make anything out of your letter except that in that "sleepy hollow" and isolated as you are you are losing your sense of proportion.

You are idealising partial struggles, bewailing lack of working class organisation when political events are taking place which smother partial struggles for ever which would smash whatever of working class organisation exists.

You need not stress the role of partial struggles to us we have become what we are on the basis of partial struggles, nor the need to organise the working class. Whatever our sins and they are plenty we have clung to the working class not from today but from our very birth. Who would say, we have not done our best? Membership of G.K.U. stands at least 20 thousand today. Mazdoor Sabha is unbroken despite daily victimisation for over a year and provocations which have increased and not abated. And so on.

What we are being made conscious of is not to sink ourselves in local partial struggles but the need to broaden them from economics to political. From local to national. Campaign politics at which you are sneering is the most effective way of achieving this as a transitional measure. Of course to talk of campaigns a cry not to get the masses into them except our usual following is to make a laughing stock of ourselves let others say that we celebrate Days only to advertise our self-importance. It is only when we grasp the political necessity for an organisational step that we will be able to check its distortion and abuse.

What events are teaching us is not the necessity to organise the T.U.s but how to overcome the lag in organisation—how to rapi-

dly organise the unorganised for immediate struggles, how to transform existing TUs into mass unions which means how to unite the vanguard (socialist), how to increase the political, ideological competence of this vanguard so that it may better down all organisational obstacles. It is the organisational needs of the working class and our national movement which makes us eager for Socialist-Communist Unity.

But what do we find? You comrades do not even seem to care for joint work.

After Bombay Bharadwaj goes to Lucknow. Narendra Deoji keeps mum.

J. P. fixes up Bharadwaj for the Behar School: We make this possible for him by postponing others of his *very* important tasks. Don't know what happens to J. P. he does not even inform him whether there will be a school or not, whether he is wanted or not.

The LCC is to meet at Calcutta. Dates are a mess. We send Ajay and Bharadwaj. Bharadwaj has to leave Calcutta (because of dates). Ajay sees J.P. for a while and then he comes to Calcutta just when LCC is to meet no prior consultations, nothing. J. P. then suddenly leaves Calcutta without doing his *own* job with his own comrades. They are going Left Nationalist and all that. J. P. got to say that he will disaffiliate them. It is your job as a Party leader to educate them do your very best to win them over. Ajay has to do his own job and also yours and stay on for 2 weeks more. This means a mess of his own work here. What would you call this? I don't know whether it arises from your methods of working or is it your line? Perhaps it is wrong to divide the two. The result is you can sulk in one corner against Leftism and we can bewail in another. Meanwhile events take place that would reduce us to pulp. And we are supposed to share events.

We are perhaps damned too puny and self-centred. Instead of riding the waves we are not even swimming together.

You tell my letter about 9 July "disappointing" but don't tell me how. I am thus helpless—neither do I see my mistake nor yours.

The "Forward Bloc" is being studied by us. We have already launched a campaign of ideological demarcation from Left nationalism and will continue our efforts in our press. You will be glad to know that after Ajay's educational campaigns our ranks in Bengal stand united—not one dissentient; either at the top or in the ranks. This gives us faith and confidence. But how much can we by ourselves do? It is this which makes us to come to you.

Again about Congress Unity. You say that "we are thinking in no less narrow terms than they." You don't quote chapter and verse. You don't argue. What can I answer? I

can only state as fervently as I can that the unity of the Congress is our first consideration because the struggle against Imperialism is our main aim. I believe you will concede that we are not sitting idle, spinning phrases and feeling warm that non-resistance to Right disruption will preserve the unity of the Congress that will lead to capitulation before Imperialism for the disruptive policy of the Right is the organisational counter-part to their political policy of compromise. From drift they are passing over to disruption for objective events won't let them drift. The nearer comes the struggle the sharper becomes the conflict. It is because we socialist are unable to *unify* the forces of struggle, unable to put up a successful resistance to Right disruption that Left disruption has been born masses of Congressmen are confused and demoralised. How can we do this unless we unify ourselves.

But you will say I only write to do propaganda for socialist unity. This is a fact from wherever one may begin the only way out visible is this. No other path is left open and this too not for long. Perhaps it is already too late. Events are marching with breathless speed.

You will be glad to learn that our boys have over-subscribed the 5000/- N.F. fighting fund. This means I am free to leave Bombay for some time. I have to go to Cawnpore as soon as I can and then hold consultations for all-India action over textiles. I am also physically played out. Do you think it will be any use my coming to Patna?

By the way I was surprised to see in the papers, Karjee and Jadunandan Sharma as having joined the Forward Bloc. How did that happen?

I hope my letter won't offend you. It has been written in a beastly hurry.

Love

Fraternally yours,

Sd/- P. C. Joshi

APPENDIX-B

The Congress Socialist Party

The Report of the Private Session

Jai Prakash was proposed to the chair. He proposed to discuss in the Private Session his thesis which had been prepared in 2 parts. He said that the purpose of such conferences was twofold, the discussion of internal policy and the public propaganda, and that the first was to be dealt with in this private session and the same would also become the Subject Committee and would discuss the Resolutions. Masani was asked to read and explain the resolutions.

The Thesis was now handed round and Jai Prakash explained it briefly. He said that in this thesis the responsibility of which lay on him alone as the Executive had not formally passed it, he had not made an attempt to lay down a New Line. It was mainly a summary of the work of the past line and a criticism of work done. The main consideration of thesis was The Indian National Congress and the approach of the party to it keeping in mind the new expression of Anti-Imperialist Struggle.

Formally from 1930-32 there had been great upheavals in the country it was felt that the Congress policy was not strong enough to deal with the united forces of Imperialism. The C.S.P. was thus formed as an alternative move in order to win over the Congress following and bring them under the Socialist Party Banner. The Congress had achieved the unity of the Anti-Imperialist forces. Our task was now not to capture the Congress but to transform it into an anti-imperialist Body. The Suggestions for accomplishing this were three. I. Work in the Congress. Work outside the Congress, and a united front of all the Anti-Imperialist Forces.

1. *Work inside the Congress.* Extend the Congress and make the lower committees and primary committees really living and live organs. Not only should these lower committee should be enlarged but the individual members should really take an active part and thus transform the Congress into a party with a truly mass basis.

2. *Work outside the Congress.* Develop all the anti-Imperialist associations such as peasants associations and youth organisations. Organise the middle classes by forming their own associations such as the rate payers association, shop assistant association and work for the affiliation of all these and till they can be affiliated enrol individually, and form committees for joint work.

3. An Anti-Imperialist Front. Form a united front of all those groups and individuals who are anti-imperialist, such as the communists the trade unionists. It is imperative that these should speak with one voice, otherwise the development of work is retarded. Until these groups merge into one party or one organisation a working agreement should be reached on immediate tasks and policy. In the Congress also all the socialist and left groups should merge together and form one party so that the left wing of the Congress is consolidated for those anxious to find a new orientation of our policy.

APPENDIX-C

(True copy)

My dear Subhas Babu,

Sometime back I wrote to you about the Socialist Book Club which we wish to organize. I also sent you a copy of the memorandum and Rules of the Club. We should like to know if you would agree to be a Foundation Member of the Club and also a member of its Advisory Council. We would be obliged for an early reply, because we wish to advertise the scheme and enroll members. Your association with the Club would be of tremendous value to us.

The day I wrote to you I also cabled to Jawaharlal for his consent to the Foundation Membership. I regret to say that he has declined our request because he says he does not know well what the scheme is like. I have sent him a copy by air mail, but I don't know what he will decide. I hope his decision will in no way influence your own and you will agree to our earnest proposal.

I shall be in Calcutta on the 25th and will stay for a few days to raise funds for the Club. We are counting on your active help in this.

With regards,

Yours affly,

Sd/- Jayaprakash

APPENDIX-D

True Copy

Vallabhbhai Patel

68 Marine Drive
Bombay
Camp: Birla House
Albuquerque Road
New Delhi.
18.4.46

My dear Jai Prakash,

I thought I would have an opportunity to have a quiet talk with you but some how or other, it did not come about. On the day you met me, you had to see Rajen Babu also and I thought I would be able to meet you afterwards. We were both very busy and our programme did not fit in. When I heard that you were leaving Delhi, I asked Prabha to convey to you my message that we must meet before your going away from Delhi. Next day, I tried to get at you, but it was not to be and afterwards I found that you had left that day. There are many things that we have to talk about quietly and for that we must find some opportunity to meet before long. At present, I will be detained in Delhi for some indefinite period, but I should like to know whether Delhi is within your programme in the near future.

On the whole, I found from your appearance that you were keeping fitter than I expected. Please look after your health and before you plunge into the thick of things, you must regain your normal self.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Vallabhbhai

Shri Jai Prakash Narain,
C/o. Acharya Narendra Deva,
Kashi Vidyapith,
Benares.

(True copy)

SECRET

Telephone: 40407
VALLABHBHAI PATEL

1, Aurangzeb Road
New Delhi
17th Octr. 1946

My dear Jai Prakash,

I have got a report that on the 10th Octr. you addressed a public meeting held under the Patna Police Lines, where you made a virulent speech against all the Police Officers beginning from I.G. down to A.S.I. You said that the constables are being victimised for political awakening that they have now got. You also

said that the constables are highly reliable persons and that they must be organised for the sake of the country, and under proper direction they could be good as freedom-fighters. You resented the retention of Mr Creed and Mr Ten-Brooke in the Police and visualised the great uprising amongst the constables of Bihar to demand their immediate removal. These were officers who, according to you, had acted inhumanly during the August Revolution, and their presence in the services was intolerable to the constables.

In the same meeting, Mr. Ramanand Tewary and Mr. Bermeshwar Singh, an ex-havildar, made speeches which were violent and made personal reflections against certain Police officers. Mr. Bermeshwar was dismissed from Hazaribagh Police recently.

A resolution was passed in this meeting asking Government to reinstate all of them who have been discharged since 1942 on political grounds.

I do not know how far this version is true, but would it not be unwise to agitate about this matter in this manner publicly, instead of approaching your own Ministry in the Province in a proper constitutional manner? Surely, you, as a Member of the Working Committee, would be expected to bring the matter to the Working Committee or the Parliamentary Board, if you have any grievance against the Ministry; but your agitation and propaganda of this nature is sure to embarrass the Ministry and also to some extent, us here who are working under a very difficult situation, particularly owing to communal tension. Your speeches are often quoted against any attempt to take action against those who are inciting people to violence on communal grounds. There may be little justification for it, but you know that those who want excuses can easily take advantage of quoting your speeches or citing your actions, whenever occasion arises.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Vallabhbhai

Sri Jai Prakash Narain
Kadam Kuan
PATNA.

True Cop,
Vallabhbhai Patel
My dear Jai Prakash,

1, Aurangzeb Road

New Delhi
26.4.47

I am enclosing herewith a cutting of the Press report from Calicut. I have been surprised that you have been able to read in my speech that I was trying to suppress the growth of the Socialist

Party. Since my release I have tried my best to bring about a fusion between your party and the Congress. Unfortunately I have failed to convert you, although I have succeeded in convincing many important individual members of the correctness of my views. I have done nothing either in thought or in action to injure the cause of your party or to do any harm to any individual member. I can only say that I am sorry that I have not been able to convince you of my bonafides. It is regrettable that at a time when we need to stand together you are consciously or unconsciously trying to divide our forces.

I hope Prabha and you are keeping fit.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Vallabhbhai

Shri Jai Prakash Narain
Kadam Kuan
Patna

(True copy)

Telephone 40407
VALLABHBHAI PATEL

1, Aurangzeb Road
New Delhi

Mussoorie, 23.5.1947
Camp: Birla House

My dear Jayaprakash,

I have received your letter of the 17th instant here early this week. I was wondering why no reply was received from you, but your letter explains the cause for delay.

Your speech at Calicut, as reported in the Press, of which I sent you a cutting, had reference to my Bombay speech only, and I was surprised that you should draw any such inference from that speech. In fact, my Bombay speech was an earnest appeal for co-operation; instead, you read therein a desire on my part to destroy your party.

From your letter I find that you do not justify your criticism as having been based on the Bombay speech, but instead you suggested that you have formed your conclusions from your impressions which you may have gathered through many years experience of inner Congress politics. I am sorry that you did not say as to your audience in your speech, but you led them to believe that my Bombay speech was the basis of your conclusions.

I do not wish to say anything about your impressions gathered from your long experience of many years, as I do not think any useful purpose would be served by raking up the past, in which I may have much more to say against you than you may have against me. It may all be due to lack of contact, or misunderstanding, or other

reasons. I had formed my impressions of you and your party during those years, but I challenge you to point out any single instance in which, since my release from Jail, I have done anything against you or your party from which you could base that inference. Of course, I have defended myself against unfair and violent attacks from individual members of your party, but that has always been done in self-defence.

You have referred to my sharp attacks within and without the A.I.C.C. against you. As I have stated above, these were attacks; if at all, that were in self-defence against those who made sharp attacks against me.

You refer to the activities of Sri S.K. Patil and Sri Shanker-rao Deo, whom you described as my "trusted lieutenants". In the first place, you are unfair to them in describing them as my lieutenants. No doubt they are my colleagues in the Congress, working in the organisation for many years, but they are leaders in their own capacity with independent judgment and freedom of action. I had never claimed them as my lieutenants any more than I can claim many of my colleagues in the Congress. It is unfair, therefore, to make me responsible for their actions or attitude towards you. I do not hold you responsible at all for the conduct of many of your colleagues in your party, who have made very violent and vicious attacks against me continuously for many years and described me as "an agent of the capitalists" or even as a communist. I do not think you can be ignorant of the conduct of your trusted colleagues, but I cannot for a moment hold you responsible for that. Munshi Ahmed Din, for instance, has carried on vulgar and violent campaign inside and outside the Congress against me both on the platform and in the Press, for many years, but I have taken no notice of it. Nor have I ever referred to you about it, because I did not hold you responsible for it.

When you were in jail, the Naval Rating incident took place in Bombay. I happened to be in Bombay at the time, and I had to deal with the ugly situation that had been created by some of your colleagues who, in combination with the Communists; created a very difficult and embarrassing situation for the Congress in Bombay. I know that you definitely disapproved of their action in this affair. Your colleagues have carried on a vigorous campaign against me about the manner in which I handled the situation on that occasion, for a long time since that incident, even after your release from jail. You have never openly disapproved of their attitude against me, although you disagreed with them. I had no alternative but to defend myself by making sharp attacks, and you cannot blame me for that.

On several occasions, I have made earnest endeavours to make reconciliation and to secure co-operation from you and your party, but every time we have met with a rebuff. It is my sad experience that although often you have agreed with our decisions

or our policy when you were with us, you disagreed afterwards on grounds of party discipline or party interest.

There are many in the Congress who feel that much of the indiscipline in the Congress is due to the existence of your party in the Congress and also of the party members working solely in its interest or for strengthening it. This naturally brings conflict and distrust, but so far as I am concerned, I have, since my release, said nothing or done nothing to come in the way of your working or your party's working in the manner you think fit, however much I may have disagreed with it.

You refer to the actions of Professor Abdul Bari and his attitude towards you, and hold me responsible for it. I am afraid at this rate you can hold me responsible for the conduct of every Congressman. When you wrote to me about Bari, I gave you a frank reply. He was a good, honest and sincere man, and he was incorruptible: He made many sacrifices in the cause of the Congress. I have not met any non-communal Congress Muslim of his calibre. He had built up his influence in the Jamshedpur Labour, which was the envy and admiration of many; and I have not seen any Congressman holding such influence anywhere over Labour except in Ahmedabad. I do not mean to defend all his actions, but who is perfect? And it would have been better if you would not have referred about his action and conduct when he is no more with us. You do not know how I tried to persuade him to change his attitude towards you, but he had his grievances against you. You complain about his being elected as President of the Provincial Congress Committee and hold me responsible for not preventing it. I do not understand how, in a democratic organisation, I can interfere in the free choice of the Provincial Congress Committee. Nor do I understand what authority you think I had in such matters to intervene.

You have made certain charges against the Congress Ministries. They may be right or wrong. I do not want to defend their actions or their conduct. Nor have I got any authority to control them in any manner. Perhaps you are labouring under a misapprehension that I am the Chairman of the Parliamentary Board. I have ceased to hold that office since my release. I have no time, nor have I any inclination, to take such a heavy responsibility. But I would be unfair to the Ministries if I did not point out to you that their charges against you are very grave. You have embarrassed them considerably in the discharge of their responsibilities on many occasions. Surely a Congress leader of your experience would not fail to appreciate the amount of embarrassment and difficulties created by your indiscreet speeches suggesting the arrest of Governors. Nor can you justify the spreading of general disloyalty and indiscipline in the Security Services such as the Police. If the Police have any genuine grievances, you can get them redressed through the Congress Organisations, or through the Congress

Working Committee. But you cannot, as a principal Congressmen, lightly allow—much less foment—indiscipline in the Police ranks.

I am glad to hear from you that you do not want to disrupt the Congress organisation, but you will excuse me if I am frank enough to say that your activities are fast leading certain Congress organisations to that end.

In the Jharia Coal Mines, in the labour field, you employed a man who, you knew well enough, was expelled from the Congress organisation. He was trained by us at Ahmedabad. He is your trusted lieutenant, perhaps in your party's pay. I am not suggesting anything wrong, but a man of such confidence of yours was entrusted with the work of bringing about a strike in the Coal fields. I hear he has now been dismissed or expelled by your local party for misappropriation of funds.

I do not wish to prolong this unpleasant and fruitless controversy. I have done so only in reply to your letter as a matter of duty. I have never mentioned any of these things to you up to now and I tried to forget the past, but you seem to keep your past impressions and experience alive. I am afraid if we meet with that background there is hardly any chance of any successful outcome of our discussions. I wish I could believe to the contrary. Anyway, I am always prepared to do my best, because you know we are getting old and the burden of responsibility is getting much heavier on our shoulders that are now getting weak for obvious reasons.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- Vallabhbhai

Sri Jayaprakash Narayan.

(True copy)

Patna
29th May 1947

My dear Sardar Saheb,

I thank you for your letter of May 23 from Mussoorie. In spite of its underlying bitterness, I am rather glad that you have enabled me to understand you better.

Let me first answer the points raised by you. I do not yet seem to have cleared the point about my Calicut speech. You seem to think that I did not tell the Calicut public what I told you in my letter. That is not so. I said at Calicut exact what I said in my letter. I was speaking on the relation of the socialists with the Congress and was emphasising the fact that as far as the fight for freedom was concerned the socialists had no

difference whatever with the Congress and that in that regard they were as true and loyal Congressmen as others. I referred them to your Bombay speech and said that Sardar Vallabhbhai has appealed to us not to leave the Congress till freedom were achieved. I said I was rather surprised at that appeal because it was Sardar Saheb and his lieutenants particularly who had done so much in the past to oust the socialists from the Congress and to prevent their growth within the Congress. I added finally that the appeal in any case was unnecessary because the socialists had never decided to leave the Congress.

This in brief is what I had said at Calicut. I cannot help it if the newspaper report you saw gave a different version. The best thing to do in the circumstance is to call for a copy of the verbatim C.I.D. report.

As regards the Naval Rating incident, I do not know how you got the impression that I disapproved of what was done by my colleagues then. It is possible that when you gave me a certain version of happenings I said that it was wrong for any one to have done what you described. But I knew nothing about the actual facts, and I remember that my friends gave me a picture of events materially different from the one I had got from you. At this distance of time I find it hard to remember all that we talked about this matter but I have one distinct recollection. I remember your telling me of certain things done by Aruna and Purushottam when I had suggested that since the account I had heard from them was different it would be useful for all of us to sit together and remove misunderstandings. But you made no response to the suggestion and the matter rested there. May I say that even at this late hour it might be useful to straighten out this Naval Rating affair, because I doubt if even now you have an unbiased account of all that happened then. For instance, you say in your letter that my friends colluded with the communists in creating an embarrassing situation. That certainly is not true. You should know by now that whatever they may or may not have done they had nothing whatever to do with the communists.

You feel bitter about what Aruna and my other friends said about the manner in which you handled the situation. They too complain of the strong language, verging on abuse, which you used then against them.

You write that on several occasions you made earnest endeavours to make reconciliation and to secure our cooperation, but every time you met with a rebuff. This is a rather astounding statement. As far as I am concerned, I know only of vague talks in which remarks such as getting old and our taking your places were made, but I never knew of any serious attempt made to secure our cooperation. On the other hand, my personal experience has been that my cooperation has not been ac-

cepted even when offered at a critical time. The instances that I gave in my previous letter was to show that whenever I attempted to have the cooperation talk translated into practice I faced a blank wall.

You say that it is your sad experience that although I often agreed with your decisions and policy, I disagreed afterwards on grounds of party discipline. I agree that this has happened sometimes; though not often. But may I submit that this is not a matter of which any grievance can be made. It is rather a part of the logic of the situation. In any case, I hope you will concede that there never has been deception in my conduct. I have always been straightforward in the expression of my views and when my individual opinion has differed from that of my group I have made no secret of the fact that in order to take the Congress in the direction which we wish to take I shall stand by and advocate our group view.

You say, again, I have made certain charges against the Congress Ministries. I made no specific charge in my letter but only wrote of their ineptitude. You say further that the Ministries have graver charges against me. I am surprised to hear this. If they have anything against me it was open to them to send for me and put the matter before me. But not even once has any minister done so. On the other hand, I have gone to them not once but several times.

You say that I have embarrassed the Ministries by my indiscreet speeches about arresting governors. It would be an awkward business to investigate into the spoken indiscretions of Congress leaders, and it might be found then that a hot-head like Jayaprakash is a lesser culprit. As for the arrest of governors I never said that the Ministers should arrest them now. All I used to say was that if and when there is another fight with the British, I should like that the Ministers continued in office and, instead of allowing themselves to be arrested by the Governors, had the latter arrested. If this embarrassed the Ministers, I am sorry for them. It may be wrong or right politically to say such things, but why should they cause embarrassment to our Ministers?

Then you accuse me for spreading general disloyalty and indiscipline in the Police. I deny this charge completely. If there is "disloyalty" among the Bihar Police, the Bihar Ministry is largely responsible for it. I think I wrote to you once that I had seen the Bihar Premier thrice in this connection and also written to him once or twice but there was absolutely no response from him. I hope the free Indian government will not follow the British policy of inventing "agitators" behind every incident provoked by their misrule. In Bihar a socialist here or a socialist there might have said an indiscreet thing about the Police or given them an indiscreet advice, but it would be foolish

to believe that a big incident like the last Police strike could have been caused merely by socialist incitement. I should also like to warn you that the way the Bihar Ministry is handling this affair is sure to lead to deep-rooted discontent and greater disloyalty. You might know that the Bihar Ministry have gone so far as to believe that even Bapu's help and advice would embarrass their administration.

I hope you will forgive me for saying that I am surprised at the extent of your misinformation and one-sided views. You say that in the Jharia coal mines I employed a man who I knew well enough was expelled from the Congress organisation. The man you refer to, Mukutdhari Singh, was never expelled from the Congress. He is a prominent Congress worker of Shahabad and is still a member of the P.C.C. You say further that I entrusted him with the work of bringing about a strike in the mines. Surely, if you think this is the way the Socialist Party works among labour, you should have nothing to do with us. Mukutdhari Singh among others (such as Awadhesh Narayan, Mundrika Singh, Aliknarayan Jha, all graduates) was sent by the Bihar Socialist Party to work among and organise the miners in Jharia and not just to foment strikes. In an industry where wages and working and living conditions have been so low and unsatisfactory, organisation of a union leads immediately to formulation of demands. Sometimes the employers were sensible, i.e. they recognised the union and settled with it. In the case of the Kustore Colliery, the owners were not prepared to settle on fair terms and that led to strike. The strike was on when the Central Government appointed a Conciliation Board. I need not go into the injustice that done to us and the mine-workers organised in our unions only because Prof. Bari was not prepared to sit with a socialist. You say again that Mukutdhari Singh has been expelled by our local party for misappropriation of funds. This again is an astounding piece of misinformation. The facts are these: Mukutdhari Singh as President of the Lodda Colliery workers Union (the largest colliery unit I believe in Jharia) was negotiating with the management. The negotiation had continued for two days when on the instigation of Sutto Sen (who was Bari's lieutenant) and his workers, a strike was precipitated. Mukut Babu's colleagues in the union—all socialists—felt that they must support the strike even though it was not properly declared. Mukut Babu differed and kept away and in private conversation spoke against the unauthorised strike. The local party took objection to his conduct and recommended to the Provincial Party to take action against him. No charge of misappropriation of funds was ever made. I know of this matter rather intimately because I have just returned from Jharia after spending two days there.

Lastly, let me say a word about the Bari episode. Why I

mentioned the matter in my letter to you was that that was one of the rare occasions when I tried to find out if the High Command would take an impartial view and correct a wrong. I was completely disillusioned then. Prof. Bari had many virtues; though those who knew him at close quarters would not be so enthusiastic about them as you have been in your letter. His hold over Jamshedpur labour was also spurious inasmuch as it was based on tall promises, self-praise and the support of the provincial Congress, the Provincial Government, & the Congress High Command. To compare the Tata Workers Union with the Ahmedabad Union is to insult the latter. However; when I wrote to you and some other members of the High Command about Prof. Bari, I did not want any of you to help me win the leadership of Jamshedpur labour—I was not interested in that. Prof. Bari was abusing me and my friends day in and day out—not politically but personally—in indecent bazar language, his men were assulting our workers and in one case had kidnapped one of them and illegally confined him and beaten him up to unconsciousness. I brought these facts to your notice and to the notice of our other leaders in the hope that such things would be stopped. But nothing happened and all that we were told was that "you know how Bari is etc". I naturally concluded that I could not expect impartial treatment from the High Command.

Regarding Prof. Bari's election to the Bihar Congress Presidentship, I do not hold you responsible for it. Sometimes in my letter I used the word "you" collectively and included other members of the High Command. When I heard that Prof. Bari was to be made the President of the B.P.C.C. I wrote a short note to Rajen Babu saying that that would be a tragedy for the province. I felt that if our cooperation was at all valued no one who was so personally and violently inimical towards me and my group should be made President. To talk of democracy in this connection is irrelevant.

You say Bari had serious changes against me. If that was so it is strange that I was never told about them.

Regarding your complaint against Munshi Ahmed Din, I am sure you have been wrongly informed that he has been attacking you for years past. But it is true, I believe, that he has rather hard things to say about your Meerut speech and your right or wrong hand in the communal evolution of the Punjab Congress.

You accuse me of not forgetting the past. You misunderstand me. I wrote of my past experiences not because I cannot let bygones be bygones, but because I was anxious to point out that though in the past you and our other leaders talked of wanting our cooperation, nothing was done in practice to obtain or accept it when offered.

This letter has already grown unconsciously long and I must close now. I had to write at some length in order to remove

the misunderstandings abounding in your letter. But I wish to assure you that nothing that has happened in the past can stand in the way of cooperation and understanding in the future. But, I should point that as we are not a power group in the Congress, cooperation for us depends not on the distribution of loaves and fishes but on political adjustments between the ideologies and programmes of the High Command and our group. I believe such an adjustment is not impossible. But it depends more on you than any one else in the Congress, and so I hope you will pursue this matter till we have come to concrete conclusions.

With the highest regards,

Yours affectionately,

Sd/-

J. P.

P.S. Prabhavati sends you her respectful pranams.

True Copy

1 Aurangzeb Road

New Delhi

Vallabhabhai Patel,

9-6-1947

My dear Jai Prakash,

After our conversation you suddenly left Delhi and I learnt from your letter that you had gone to Gorakhpur. I thought that you would discuss the matter with your colleagues and then it would be discussed informally between representatives of both groups before taking the matter up in the Working Committee.

2 I was not present when the matter was discussed in the Working Committee, nor do I know anything about it.

3 I had a talk with Narendra Deva and Lohia at my place and they were awaiting your arrival. In the meanwhile, some reports from the Bombay C.I.D. have been received by me which have been handed over to Gandhiji. There seems to be little doubt that if the reports are true, you will have to make serious efforts to change the policy of your party. You must have seen those reports from Brijkishan. If any scheme for mutual co-operation is to be worked out, it can only be done if it is recognized that such programme, as is indicated in the Bombay reports, is inconsistent with such a desire.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Vallabhbhai

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan
New Delhi

APPENDIX-F

मणीबहेन वल्लभभाई पटेल

नवजीवन

अहमदाबाद-14

3-11-1972

भाई जयप्रकाश जी

“स्टेटस” में आपका लेख “Where Patel & Socialism” कुछ दिन पढ़ा पड़ा।

आपने लिखा है कि, Sardar lived in a huge house. सबसे छोटा मकान सरदार का था। चार सोने के कमरों में से पिता-पुत्री तो एक ही कमरे का उपयोग करते थे। एक छोटे से कमरे में मिलने आने वाले लोग बैठते थे। बगल में P.A. के दफ्तर का छोटा कमरा। उसके बगल में drawingroom। उसमें हर प्रकार की-पार्टीशन कौन्सिल की, कांग्रेस कार्यकार्यणी की सभी प्रकार की मिटिंगें होती रहती थी। सरदार को मिलने आने वाले भी इसी कमरे में मिलते थे। वहाँ ही सोफा पर बैठ कर वर्तमान पत्र, कागज पढ़ते थे। इसी कमरे में सोफे पर बैठते थे। उसकी बगल का छोटा कमरा था, जिसका उपयोग सरदार और उनके सचिव शंकर की आफिस के लिये होता था। खाने का गोल कमरा छोटा ही था। बड़ी मुश्किल से दस कुर्सी लग सकती थी।

जवाहरलाल जी तीनमूर्ति पर रहने को चले गये, तब माउन्ट बेटन सरदार को विनिंग्डन क्रेसन्ट जाने को समझाने के लिये आये थे, शायद मैं विरोध करूँगी, इस ख्याल से मुझे समझाने की कोशिश की परंतु हमने साफ इनकार कर दिया कि लोगो को यही मिलने आने में आसानी रहती है। हमें वहाँ नहीं जाना है। यह मकान सरकारी नहीं था, requisitioned था।

I.C.S. को आपको लगता है कि बहुत दे दिया है। आपको पता नहीं है कि लंदन से जो प्रतिनिधि वहाँ की सरकार के ओर से I.C.S. के बारे में चर्चा करने समजोता करने आये थे, वे तो चाहते थे कि सबको sterling में पेन्शन तथा तनखा मिले। जो हिन्दुस्तान आजाद होने के कारण इस्तीफा दे, सब को पेन्शन अंग्रेज भारतवासी सब हिन्दुस्तान चूकावे और sterling में। सरदार ने अंग्रेज की जिम्मेवारी लेने का साफ इन्कार किया और भारतवासी को भी sterling में देने का स्वीकार नहीं किया।

आपने तो I.A.S. सर्विस शुरू की तब तो दिल्ली में ट्रेनिंग स्कूल रखी थी। आपके चल बसने बाद मंसूरी ले जाने के बाद उसमें सब खराबी आई। I.A.S. Service आपने शुरू की। उनके पास से आपने जो अपेक्षा रखी थी उस संबंध में आपने उनको कहा था। “The future of his country lies in your hands. See that you keep it safe.”

Constituent Assembly में I.C.S. के बारे में ओक्टोबर 10, 1946 को आपने कहा था। I wish to assure you that I have worked with them during the difficult period—I am speaking

with a sense of heavy responsibility and I must confess that in point of patriotism, in point of loyalty you cannot have a substitute. They are as good as ourselves. I wish to place on record of the house that if during the last two or three years most of the members of the Services had not behaved patriotically and with loyalty the Union would have collapsed.

हमारी आर्थिक परिस्थि बहुत बिकट थी। श्री मथाई वित्त मंत्री थे। खर्च में सब विभागों में कांटछांट करने की योजना ले मथाई आपके पास आये थे। जवाहरलालजी विदेश यात्रा पर थे। आपकी अपील पर services ने अपनी तनखायों में स्वयं दस की काट सालभर के लिये की थी।

हमारे मकान में पड़दे आदी सब खादी के थे। सरकार के खर्च से नहीं कमरे में दरी भी हैसियत की थी, एक दो नौकर उसे उठा सके, इस लिये उसे बड़े कमरे में जा रखी थी। मात्र दफतर का फर्निचर सरकारी था। न हमने कभी चपरासी का घर के कोई काम के लिये उपयोग किया, न निजी डाक में सरकारी कागज टीकीट का उपयोग किया।

आप अपने निजी व्यवहार में इतने जामूत थे। उसका असर सरकारी कर्मचारीओं पर पड़ना स्वाभाविक है ना ? श्री प्रकाश जी ने कई बार सरदार को कहा था कि मंत्रीगण को अपने साथ सरकारी खर्च से पत्नी या कोई एक रिश्तेदार को प्रवास में रखने की सुविधा मिलनी चाहिए। परंतु आपने साफ इन्कार कर दिया।

केबिनेट मीशन रु. 20 से 40 रोज का भ्रष्टा संसद सदस्य के लिये करना चाहती थी। तब सरदार ने कहा था कि आप हमारे लोगों को गिराना चाहते हो ? यह नहीं हो सकता। आपकी हयाती में दैनिक भ्रष्टे में बढ़ावा न हो पाया। जिस के हाथ में राज्य की बागडोर है, उसका जितना नैतिक स्तर, निजी व्यवहार में उसकी जितनी स्वाभाविक सादगी, त्याग वगैर उतना ही उसका प्रतिबिम्ब कुछ न कुछ कर्मचारीओं पर पड़ सकता है ना ?

आपको मालूम न होगा कि बिहार की मोलेसेस की गड़बड़ी के कागज आपने विमारी में देहरादून में सारे देखे। केस तैयार करके कोंग्रेस कारोबारी के पास भेजा। परंतु उतने में आप चल बसे। अगर कुछ समय और रहते तो इसको साफ करते। परिणाम जिनको जाना पड़ता, उनको जाना ही पड़ता। मैं ने दो तीन बार इस बारे में कहा भी। परंतु मेरी आवाज पर पूरा ध्यान नहीं दिया गया।

सरदार नर्मदाप्रसाद मत्स्य यूनियन में मंत्री थे। दिल्ली में कोन्स्टीटुशन हाउस में रिश्त लेते पकड़े गये थे। जवाहरलालजी ने सरदार को कहा कि मैं सरदार नर्मदाप्रसाद को जानता हूं उत्तर प्रदेश कोंग्रेस के कोषाध्यक्ष थे। आपने कहा उत्तरप्रदेश कोंग्रेस समिति के पास क्या होगा ? आपके समय में तो केस

किया था। परंतु आपके देहांत पर उसको भी आगे बढ़ने नहीं दिया। इन दो मामलों पर से आप समझ सकोगे कि कांग्रेस में नैतिक स्तर के बारे में, रुपये पैसे के मामलों आदि में वे कितने जागृत थे।

आप कहाँ होंगे मालूम नहीं। परंतु आपके स्थाई पते पर यह कागज भेजती। हूँ

आपका स्वास्थ्य ठीक होगा। प्रभावती अच्छी होगी।

मणीबह बल्लभभाई पटेल

श्री जयप्रकाश नारायण,
महिला चर्खा समिति,
कदमकूआ,
पटना 3.

APPENDIX-E

True Copy

Delhi
30-9-59

Dear Bhai,

I am inflicting on you a rather long paper that is being sent with this letter. I have prepared this paper with a good deal of thought and I do beseech you most earnestly to be good enough to read it and give it your serious consideration. When you have read it and have also some time. I would like to come up and meet you to discuss this matter. It appears from the papers that you would be much on the move in the coming days, but if you ask your secretary to drop me a line about when I could see you, I would be very grateful. I could be in Delhi from October 12 to 15 and then any day after November 15.

I am sending copies of the paper to Indu, Dhebarbhai, Morarjibhai, Lalbahadurji; Ganga Sharan Singh; Kripalaniji Rajaji, chairman of the Jan Sangh and a few other political leaders. After I have discussed it with a few friends, I shall send it to the C.P.I. and other parties too.

I am, of course, sending it to Rajen Babu and Dr. Radhakrishnan.

I have not discussed the paper with Vinobaji yet in fact, I have just finished writing it. Nor has it been considered yet by the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Once again I beg you to give your sympathetic consideration to the plea I have made in my paper. Without your support it would be impossible to move a single step forward in that direction.

With deep regards,

Yours affectionately,

APPENDIX-G

True Copy

Prime Minister's House
New Delhi

No. 152-PMH/60

January 30, 1960

My dear Jayaprakash,

Your letter of the 23rd January about Jaggia. I have enquired about this. There is one fact which perhaps has not been brought to your notice. Jaggia will actually get much more in London than he is getting here. His salary will be free of income-tax. Further, he will get a Foreign allowance of Rs. 775/-per month besides an entertainment allowance from the lump sum grant placed at the disposal of the High Commissioner.

The practice followed in this is the usual one in the case of Foreign Service. Jaggia is replacing J D Shukla in London who is at present receiving a basic salary of Rs. 2150/-. He is an officer of the I.C.S. cadre and had he continued in India, he might have got a salary of Rs. 3,000/-. In fact, his contemporaries in India are doing so.

Yours affectionately,

Sd/- Jawaharlal .

New Kadam Kuan,
PATNA.

APPENDIX-H

No. 170-PMH/63
PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
January 25, 1963

My dear Jayaprakash,

I have received two letters from you today. One is about the Afro-Asian Council meeting to be held at Saigon. I have handed this over to the Foreign Secretary and he will take the necessary steps. There should be no difficulty about your team going to Saigon.

Your second letter. It is true that many things that you have said have pained me greatly, and it has seemed to me that there is a very considerable difference between your views on some matters and mine. But it is not the views that count so much, for these may differ, but the impression that I got that you dislike me. I am sorry that you have got the impression that I have no affection or respect for you. All I can say is that is a wrong impression.

You have said that I should have met you to discuss these matters. I have, in fact, met you from time to time. I did not always know when you were here. Apart from that, I confess that I hesitated to send for you because I felt that might embarrass you and possibly me too.

You refer to a Chinese friend of yours, Mr. Chang Kuo-sin. I shall gladly see him if you so wish. I do not know how long he is here. I am afraid I am rather heavily occupied for the next few days. He can see me at 3.-30 P.M. on the 31st January in my office in the External Affairs Ministry.

Yours affectionately,
Sd/- Jawaharlal

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan
DELHI.

No. 1640-PMH/62.

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
October 11, 1962.

My dear Jayaprakash,

Some days ago, I saw a report in the Press of your statement expressing your disapproval of "the manner in which the Prime Minister is carrying on the language controversy since

his return from abroad". You compared this in some way to why people should misbehave in Legislatures. I was much surprised to read this. But I did not think it worthwhile to say anything about it. This morning, I received, presumably from you, a copy of your full statement which I have read. I may be wrong, of course, in the views I hold or in the expression of them. But it does seem to me rather odd that you should immediately issue a statement without trying to verify what I said. I spoke in Hindi. Therefore, I did not call anything "stupid". No one was referred to. I do not think that I used the word 'bewaqoof' either. I discussed certain policies only and probably said that the cry of 'Angrezi hatao' etc. was rather childish. Perhaps, I might have used the word 'jehalat' in this connection.

I referred to the statement made in Parliament both by Pantji and me two years ago that English should be an associate language at the Centre till such time as the non-Hindi-speaking States could say that it was not necessary. That is exactly what Vinobaji has said.

I laid stress also on the medium of instruction being the regional language. I further pointed out that the Hindi-Speaking States could certainly use as much Hindi as they liked. The question was of the language at the Centre and, in view of the opposition in some States, it was not desirable to do anything which would mean forcing it down their throats against their will. I was speaking at a National Integration meeting and I said that this would not help in integration, but would have the reverse effect. Further, I said that English and other foreign languages should be taught not as a medium of instruction, but as necessary languages. I said further that we had been for long an inward-looking people and had cut ourselves off to a large extent from outside influences, while the world was changing rapidly. It would be a pity if we continued to do that.

The second time I referred to it was at the opening ceremony of a Girls' College where the question arose in some speech or other. I have been unable to discover what was wrong with the manner in which I referred to these questions, and your statement has not helped me at all in doing so.

Yours affectionately,

Jawaharlal Nehru

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
New Kadam Kuan,
Patna.

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE

Rashtrapati Nilayam,
Hyderabad,
July 19, 1962.

My dear Jayaprakash,

Thank you for your letter of July 15. I have the papers you have sent with it and found them very interesting and informative. I am forwarding them to the Ministry of External Affairs and am pointing out to them the desirability of providing more scholarships for African students.

I have for the first time read Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's statement which you have sent me. I think it would be a good thing if you had it published through the Sarva Seva Sangh.

I am keeping quite well. I shall be returning to Delhi tomorrow morning.

Yours affectionately,
Jawaharlal

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna 3.

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI

No. 1639-PMH/62.

October 10, 1962.

My dear Jayaprakash,

I had fully intended to come tomorrow to your sixtieth birthday celebrations at 30, Ferozshah Road. But, rather suddenly, I have got an important engagement just at that time which I cannot forego. I am sorry, therefore, that I cannot come personally to congratulate you on your birthday. Please forgive me.

I send you all my good wishes.

Yours affectionately,

Jawaharlal

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
30, Ferozshah Road.
New Delhi.

APPENDIX-L

Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna-3.

Delhi

Priya Bhai,

A Chinese friend of mine, Mr. Chang Kuo-Sin, from Hong Kong is here for a few days. He is a Publisher at Hong Kong and has been connected with me through the Afro-Asian Council, which we established primarily to fight for Tibet. Chang has come here on behalf of the Formosa Government and President Chiang-Kai-Shek. I think it is important, apart from considerations of courtesy, that you meet him and hear him patiently and sympathetically. He has not come with any proposal that India should break with Peking and link up with Taipeh. His is a straight forward proposition. Both India and Taiwan are up against the same enemy. They need not become formal allies and India may not give up her non-alignment. But yet he and Taiwan feel that they can help India in many vital ways. You may spurn this help (I hope you won't), but you should meet Chang. Please do not decide on the spur of the moment, give his submission serious thought. The challenge of China is a long-term one and it has little to do with our borders. China will not be satisfied with anything else than to see the whole of Asia turn to Chinese Communism. India is the most powerful obstacle in her path and she cannot rest unless the obstacle is removed. We have to fight against that danger in our own way, without giving up our basic principles and values. But Chang and Taipeh are not even expecting, much less demanding it.

Chang is staying at the Janpath Hotel.

With kindest regards,

Yours affty,
Sd/- Jayaprakash

APPENDIX-M

True Copy
Jayaprakash Narayan
Permanent Address:
Kadam Kuan, Patna-3

Camp: On Train
27.1.63

Dear Bhai,

I am very thankful to you for your agreeing to meet my friend, Chang Kuo-Sin, as also for your making it possible for us to go to Saigon Conference.

I am very sorry that any thing I have done or said has hurt you. In the past few years, I have often found myself in strong disagreement with your policy or action, and some times, impelled by sense of duty, have spoken out. It has never crossed my mind to say anything to hurt you.

It would never be an embarrassment to me if at any time you were to ask me to see you—if that should embarrass you I could hardly help it. For my part, whenever I had any work with you, I never hesitated to see you.

With deep regards,

Affectionately yours,
Sd/- Jayaprakash

APPENDIX-N

149 Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bombay 1.

February 4, 1963.

Personal

My dear J.P.,

You will remember that a couple of months ago when we met at Ruparel's place, I had brought to your attention a press report of a speech made by you in Gujarat where your criticism of Rajaji's plea for an alliance with the Democracies was highlighted. You yourself were put out by the report and said that this was only one of many topics you had referred to and that you would try to take an opportunity to soften the effect of this.

It is in the light of that conversation that I am sending you herewith clippings from the *Times of India* of 31st January and today's *Indian Express* which show that, during your current visit to Gujarat, the same thing has happened all over again.

Please do not think that I am trying to interfere with your stating your point of view on non-alignment. What bothers me, however, is whether you really feel that, in the context of the colossal disasters which have resulted from the past and current governmental policies about which so much can, and needs to, be said, it is necessary to go out of the way to enter into this academic argument with Rajaji. To put it from your own point of view, there is no "danger" of a military alliance with the West. There is so much in common between all of us and so much that needs to be put right in official policies that it does seem to me that, in this kind of cross-fire, the beneficiaries can only be the communists and their friends. Just as Rajaji and I have been criticising non-alignment without ever referring to your support of it, is it not similarly possible for you to support non-alignment without necessarily attacking or even mentioning those who are convinced that another path would be more helpful?

In this connection, I think you will find the enclosed article by Frank Moraes in today's *Indian Express* of interest. The danger, as he brings out, is that good people like you, while speaking in support of non-alignment—an ambiguous word—are actually bolstering a distorted version of it which is being practised against your own wishes.

When do we meet again? Do let me know about your movements so that with luck, I may be able to see you before long.

Yours as ever
Minoo

encl:
Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
PATNA 3.

APPENDIX-O

J. B. Kripalani

Gandhi Ashram,
Shahnajaf Road,
Lucknow.
December 29, 1962.

My dear Jayaprakash,

There is a widespread feeling that a few friends, representative of various trends of thought in the country, should get together to consider the grave situation in which the nation has been placed and the manner in which its affairs are being handled today. I have been pressed by friends to take the initiative in arranging for a small informal meeting of this nature. Its deliberation will not bind the party to which you may belong. I would like to know if it will be possible for you to attend such a meeting, to be held in Delhi some time in the last week of January.

A list of those whom I am inviting is attached herewith. An immediate line in reply will oblige.

With best wishes and regard,

Yours Affectionately,
(J. B. Kripalani)

1. Dr. Rajendra Prasad
2. Sri Raj Gopala Chari
3. Sri Prafulla Ghosh
4. Sri Jai Prakash Narain
5. Sri N. G. Ranga
6. Sri Ram Manohar Lohia
7. Sri Ganga Saran Singh
8. Sri M. R. Masani
9. Sri Raghu Vira
10. Gen. Kariappa
11. Sri J. B. Kripalani
12. Sri M. S. Aney

APPENDIX-P

True Copy
Tel : 75954

16 Golf Link Road
New Delhi 2
12.9.63

Dear J.P.,

Recent days have been full of changes. It is not easy to assess them or decide on their import. Perhaps one cannot escape objective influence in detecting the direction in them.

I wish I had the benefit of your advice and guidance. Except for brief comments of yours in the press I have not been able to gather from friends any detailed picture of your views on the party and perhaps on the Congress too, the assessments vary often sharply.

I believe that the situation is full of possibilities and dangers. It is one occasion when selected risks have to be taken—if one's allegiance to one's objectives is not to remain purely academic. I hope I shall soon have the opportunity of meeting you—and sharing your thoughts and affections.

Yours
Sd/- Asoka

APPENDIX-Q

**PRAJA SOCIALIST PARTY,
18 Windsor Place New Delhi-1**

September 28, 1963

My dear Jayaprakashji,

Please find enclosed a copy of the resolution adopted by the National Executive of the PSP regarding Shri Asoka Mehta's acceptance of the new assignments. We listened to the arguments put-forth by everyone of the members and tried our best to see that we do not give any offence to anyone. The argument that he is in UNO at present and we must not do something which would compromise his position there and a fervent appeal by Shri Nath Pai in that regard weighed with us. The resolution you will agree is very mild and the trouble that is being kicked up is not warranted by facts. Whatever that may be we have to face the situation with courage and determination.

I hope you got our telegram of goodwishes on your birthday. I do not know whether your Vijayadasami is on the same day as ours. Anyway I am celebrating it according to our calendar.

With affectionate regards,

**Yours sincerely,
S. M. Joshi**

Encl:

**Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
C/O Sarvodaya Mandal,
BUNIADGANJ
Dist. Gaya
(Bihar)**

February 8, 1964

Dear Asoka:

I felt terribly depressed after the last talk with you. On the way back to Patna I was thinking about the situation that is brewing. This is how I would sum up my thoughts:

1. There is no question but that the view-point you express has every right to exist within the PSP and to develop and spread, if possible.

2. But as long as that view-point does not come to be the official policy of the Party, no individual member can have the

right to act according to it (as you have acted).

3. The tensions that are building up within the Party on account of your action (acceptance of the Planning Commission post), are bound to lead to another split; which I presume will not further the policy that you wish the PSP to adopt.

4. Discussion on your policy is clouded and distorted on account of your personal action having become the central point of the present controversy, which again obstructs the spread of that policy within the Party.

5. Your prestige in the country and the Planning Commission is suffering on account of the controversy; and is bound to suffer further if the Party Executive were to adopt an adverse decision.

It seems to me that you alone can save the situation. This may be done in some such manner as follows:

You may write to the Chairman of the Party

- (a) that the PSP is the only political party to which you can belong;
- (b) that the Party was unfortunately following a rigid and unrealistic policy with which you do not agree and which is bound to harm the cause of democratic socialism;
- (c) that despite (b) you have no wish yourself to sever your connection with the party;
- (d) but that as the Executive disagrees with your action (joining the Planning Commission) and requests you to resign your membership, you are reluctantly doing so in order to avoid embarrassment and possible weakening of the Party;
- (e) that even though you are resigning, you will continue to consider yourself associated with the PSP; and
- (f) that you hope your resignation would remove the obstacle to dispassionate thinking and the Party, sooner rather than later, would see its way to revise its present policy and adopt a more constructive and realistic one.

If you do not agree with my suggestion, please do not feel constrained to throw it out.

With all good wishes,

Affectionately,

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

APPENDIX-R

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Not for publication or
Circulation

Camp: Sarvodaya Ashram
Sokhodeora (Gaya)
June 23, 1966.

When I was in Delhi recently for a day, I learnt that you had asked Mr. Sadiq and some of his colleagues to meet you on the 26th for a review of the Kashmir question. In view of the importance of that meeting, I am venturing to place before you some of my ideas in that connection. I hope I am not being a nuisance, and that you will not think I am trying to pressurise you.

The Kashmir question has plagued this country for 19 years. It has cost us a great deal materially and spiritually. We profess democracy, but rule by force in Kashmir—unless we have auto-suggested ourselves into believing that the 2 general elections under Bakshi Saheb had expressed the will of the people, or that the Sadiq government is based on popular support except for a small minority of pro-Pakistan traitors. We profess secularism, but let Hindu nationalism stampede us into trying to establish it by repression.

Kashmir has distorted India's image for the world as nothing else has done. There is no nation in the world, not even Russia, which appreciates our Kashmir policy, though some of them might, for their own reasons, give us their support.

No matter how much and how loud and how long we shout that Kashmir is an inalienable part of India and that, therefore, there was no Kashmir problem, the fact remain that a serious and urgent problem faces, and will continue to face, us in that part of the country.

That problem exists not because Pakistan wants to grab Kashmir, but because there is deep and wide-spread political discontent among the people. The people of India might be kept in the dark about the true state of affairs in the Valley, but every chancellory in New Delhi knows the truth, and almost every foreign correspondent. It would appear that all but our Intelligence know the facts, or, perhaps, we too know the facts but do not wish to face them and hope that someone—may be Sadiq Saheb or Quasim Saheb—might one day perform some miracle that would bring about a psychological revolution in the valley.

Historical events, some without some within our control, have narrowed down greatly the room for manoeuvrability that the Government of India may have now. For instance, any manner of de-accession of any part of the State is now impracticable—no matter how just or fair according to the principles of democracy

and secularism. Whatever be the solution, it has to be found within the limitations of the accession.

It is here that Sheikh Saheb's role *may* become decisive. I have been pressing for his release not because he is a friend. Friendship, no doubt, counts in every human situation, but I hope I have enough moral discipline to allow without protest even my nearest and dearest one to be sent to the gallows if that were the demand of justice—I would have added 'and of national interest' had it not been for the fact that many times it is not possible to be sure what is in the national interest and different persons, all equally patriotic, may have different interpretations of it in a given situation.

On this count too, let me say, it was not justice to have arrested and detained Sheikh Abdullah without giving him a chance to clear himself of the charges so wildly made against him. On his part, he had established his bonafides sufficiently by deciding to return to his country and answer his detractors.

Nor do I think that he is a traitor. Godse thought that Gandhiji was a traitor. The R.S.S. thinks that Jayaprakash is a traitor. Godse was an individual, the R.S.S. is a private organization, a democratic government represents the people and has principles and procedures according to which it functions. Nobody can be held to be a traitor by the Government of India unless it has been established in accordance to due process of law. If the Government finds it difficult to do that, it is cowardly to use the D.I.R. and continue to use it indefinitely, even when no palpable danger to the country's defence remains.

It was I think indiscreet of Sheikh Saheb to have met Chou-en-Lai. But that is all that can be said about it. No fair-minded person would consider that as a treasonous act. When the Chinese had attacked in 1962; had he not written to the Prime Minister 'expressing our deep anguish'? Did he not on May 25, 1964, publicly rebuke in Rawalpindi Chaudhari Ghulam Abbas for having sought Chinese intervention? In London did he not say at a press conference (Times, March 19, 1965) that China's claims on Ladakh were 'inadmissible'?

Much has been made of Sheikh's statements abroad. I doubt if on an objective examination, those statements, as published in the foreign press and not their garbled versions in India, would amount to any thing more than what he had been saying in India. I agree that it would have been better if Sheikh Saheb had spoken less and more guardedly. But Sheikh Saheb cannot be expected to be any thing but himself—he just cannot keep quiet. This is a common failing of us Indians. Have not Union Cabinet members been speaking out of turn, not only in India but even abroad, even in Jawaharlalji's life-time?

I would like to close this chapter with one more quotation from the Sheikh. Before he had left for his trip abroad this is

what he had said at a farewell function at the Constitution Club on February 10, 1965: 'We might have difference among ourselves. But after all India is the homeland of us all. If God forbid, India ceases to be India and goes down, how can others be saved? We have to look at problems from that angle.'

But I have not been agitating for the Sheikh's release because he is a friend, or just because I am concerned about civil liberties. These considerations may be in the background. My primary concern in this matter has been to seek a solution of the Kashmir problem. As I see it, if there is any chance of this matter being settled, it is with the help of Sheikh Abdullah. I am not hundred per cent sure of this—no one can be. But the odds appear to me to be favourable enough to urge Sheikh Abdullah's unconditional release. An element risk may be there, but there is risk in every big political or military decision, in fact in most human decisions, as even when two persons decide to wed.

Here may I digress a little? Nandaji seems to have told Shri R. K. Patil that Jayaprakash is 'completely out of touch with public sentiment' on the question of Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah. I suspect that more of your colleagues are of that view. I therefore want to offer a few comments to clear the air—incidentally, that might help your colleagues to come to the right decision.

First of all, some people (mostly crypto-communists, and Hindu nationalists of all hues) have created a certain image of Jayaprakash Narayan—a silly idealist or a hidden traitor—and whatever that man says or does is twisted to fit that image. For instance, I am supposed to have advocated the giving away of Nagaland to the Nagas, Kashmir to the Pakistanis. I have never even remotely made any such suggestion. Even in the case of Aksai Chin, had suggested a lease (an internationally recognised transaction and one that was agreed to by India in a recent Indo-Nepal deal). That lease too was suggested as a measure of give and take, i.e. if China agreed to India's counter demand, may be in the Chumbi Valley or elsewhere along the 2500 miles of border. But having created a false image, it was easy for any one to throw stones at it.

But that did not alienate Jayaprakash from public sentiment. Without appearing to be vain, I make bold to say that except for you personally, there is no one in your government who is as constantly and widely in touch with the people as I. Almost daily I address public meetings, and invariably my experience has been that I am heard in pin-drop silence and afterwards people come to assure me that they had been completely misled and if that was what I meant, they were all for it. The only two of my meetings that were disturbed were in Delhi at the time of my visit to West Pakistan and the trouble-makers were R.S.S. boys whose minds were closed. I am not saying that every one who listens is persuaded, but I *am* saying that the views I propound—with frankness

and sincerity—are far from being out of touch with public sentiment.

Lastly (on this digressive count), the leaders of this country are not doing justice by the people. It is the job of leaders to lead, but most of them are too timid and weak to speak out the truth, to advocate unpopular policies, and, if the need arose, to face the wrath of the people. For my part, I have faith in our people—they are sound and intelligent. If they are given all the facts, they can take the right decisions. May I say here, without appearing to flatter you, that by your recent bold decisions you have shown that you are attempting to give the people courageous leadership.

Returning to the main theme of this letter, why do I plead for Sheikh Saheb's release? Because that may give us the only chance we may have of solving the Kashmir problem. Why? Because in the event of the Government of India reaching an agreement with him about the future status of Kashmir—which will have to be within the limits of accession—the Sheikh is the only Kashmiri leader who could swing Muslim opinion in the valley towards his side. I believe it is obvious that the farthest that any status within the Indian Union can go is full internal autonomy, i.e. a return to the original terms of the accession.

Several questions arise at this point. Will Sheikh Saheb agree to any such status? If he did, would he succeed in persuading the Kashmiris to rally round him? Would not autonomous Kashmir, sooner or later, attempt to secede from the Union?

Nandaji tries to cloud the whole issue by asking for proof that the Sheikh's thinking has changed. Earlier, he seemed to think otherwise. Referring to the interview of Shri Radhakrishna and Shri Narayan Desai with Sheikh Saheb, Nandaji had stated in the Rajya Sabha on November 26, 1965, that the Sarvodaya leaders' meeting had produced a 'very positive reaction'.

Be that as it may; all this talk of the Sheikh not having changed appears puerile to me. Keeping people in jail is not the best way of inducing them to be more malleable. Nandaji should have learnt that much from his own experience in British Indian prisons.

Moreover, supposing the Sheikh were released in a fanfare of official propaganda about the Sheikh having changed would an iota be left of his political utility for India? After that if the Sheikh were to arrive in Srinagar, would the crowds be chanting 'Sher-i-Kashmir Zindabad' or 'Bharat Ka Pithu Murdabad'? What chance would he have of persuading the Kashmiris to become good Indian citizens? All this is so obvious that it is amazing that the Home Minister is unable to see it.

On the contrary, I am sure that on his release Sheikh Saheb would again reiterate the right of the Kashmiris to decide their future; he would again declare that the accession was not final and that

the so-called general elections had not expressed the people's will. We should have maturity enough to understand that and not to denounce him as a Pakistani agent. He can never hope to persuade the Kashmiris to accept an autonomous position within India if he did not make it clear that it was they and not any body else who was to take that decision. In stead of that, if he came out and declared that the issue had been settled already when he was in prison by the Kashmir Constituent Assembly and the two general elections that followed, his voice would carry no more weight than that of Bakshi Saheb did or of Sadiq Saheb does.

The more important question is, how would Sheikh Abdullah want the Kashmiris to 'decide their future'? I am sure *not* by a plebiscite. Then how? One way, and the best in the circumstances, would be to let the people decide at the general election in 1967. The Sheikh could do that by fighting the election on the basis of his agreement with the Government of India (as envisaged above). Could the Kashmiri people be enthused over autonomy within the Union? I think they could, by Sheikh Saheb frankly telling them that that was the only way they could save themselves from self-destruction as a result of their territory becoming a battleground for India and Pakistan; that if it could be shown that they had taken that decision freely at an election run by their genuine leaders (like himself), Pakistan would have no ground left to interfere in their affairs; that that was the best way to bring about Indo-Pak amity; that they would be rid of the overbearing Indian police and enjoy full freedom to order their lives as they liked. If all that were put across to the people by one in whom they had trust, I have every hope that they would acquiesce willingly.

I may be asked, what ground have I for believing that Sheikh Abdullah would accept autonomy within India? Part of the argument I had given in a press statement, which had received your and your government's notice at the time. I reproduce it below:

'It has been known these many years that Sheikh Saheb has been resolutely against Kashmir being merged with Pakistan. He did, no doubt, entertain ideas of some kind of an independent Kashmir; but I believe he is realist enough to realise that (a) no solution of the Kashmir question could ever be accepted by India, after the last war with Pakistan, that involved de-accession of the State, or any part of it, from the Union; and (b) an independent State in that part of the world could have little chance of survival in face of Pakistan's consuming hunger for the valley of Kashmir and, the emergence of the Chinese power in the region—a power that cannot be expected to exercise self denial in relation to its weak neighbours.'

In addition to the above argument, I have this to say. Sheikh Saheb *had* told Narayan and Radhakrishna that he would be prepared even to accept the status of full internal autonomy for Kashmir, *provided history were not allowed to repeat itself*. By that he meant, provided the autonomy was not gradually whittled down and the Centre did not interfere in the State's internal affairs.

The last evidence I have is the report of Gul Shah, of which J.J. has already apprised you fully.

I grant that my case is not fool-proof. But no case can be. Nandaji's own case is far from it. To hold a general election in Kashmir with Sheikh Abdullah in prison is like the British ordering an election in India while Jawaharlal Nehru was held in prison. No fair-minded person would call it a fair election. Nor would that election settle any political issue more than the two earlier ones did. And if we miss the chance of using the next general election to win the consent of the people to their place within the Union, I cannot see what other device will be left to India to settle the problem. To think that we will eventually wear down the people and force them to accept at least passively the Union is to delude ourselves. That might conceivably have happened had Kashmir not been geographically located where it is. In its present location, and with seething discontent among the people, it would never be left in peace by Pakistan. China is bound sooner or later to take a hand in the sport of fishing in troubled waters. With the issue settled to the satisfaction of the great majority of the people, the external mischief-makers would not find a favourable soil for sowing their mischief.

Internationally, India's prestige would soar. No reasonable government would then be able to point an accusing finger at us.

Another question may be asked: will Sheikh Abdullah negotiate with the Government of India to the exclusion of Pakistan? Well, he told the two Sarvodaya friends that in the light of the Indo-Pak war and its consequences, he was quite prepared to have bilateral talks with India. He called that the 'first stage' meaning thereby that later on Pakistan would have to be brought into the picture and persuaded to accept the compact made between him and the Government of India. I see nothing offensive in this approach. Sooner or later Pakistan's support to any real settlement in Kashmir will have to be obtained, so that the cease-fire line might be normalised (rationalised?), dis-engagement of the armed forces of the two countries could be secured and the tension between the two countries, with its terrible effect on Kashmir, might be eased. In stead of resenting Sheikh Saheb's anxiety to secure Pakistan's acceptance of his compact with India, we should ourselves take the initiative and use his good offices in

this behalf in the manner found feasible.

I am sorry to have inflicted on you such a long letter. But I felt it was my duty to my country to put these thoughts before you and your colleagues.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi.

APPENDIX-S

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
August 2, 1966

Confidential
No. 1236-PMO/66

My dear Jayaprakashji,

I have received your letter of July 17.

I have no objection to your meeting Sheikh Sahib while you are in Kodaikanal. The Home Ministry are issuing necessary instructions in the matter. I am sure you will agree that it would not be desirable for your talks to find their way into the Press or otherwise become public. Any public disclosure at this stage would not be helpful.

I have since also received your other letter of July 24 with which you were good enough to send me a copy of your article for the London Observer. I shall read it with interest.

I look forward to meeting you.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna 3.

September 2, 1966

PERSONAL

My dear

I understand that you are coming to Bihar to see Vinobaji. I wish I could have been present on the occasion, but the Kedaghe of the Naga Federal Government has sent me word that he would like to meet him at Chedema on the 16th and 17th September—that makes it impossible for me to be at Pusa Road on the 19th.

I am writing this to make two requests. If time permits, we would like you to address a public meeting at Pusa Road when you visit Vinoba. Bhai always did that whenever he visited Vinoba at his camps.

The other request is again about a visit. It appears that while in Patna, you are scheduled to visit (or open) a Bal Bhawan. Two or three furlongs from there is located the new Rajendra Memorial Research Institute for Medical Sciences. The Institute is being run mainly on grants from the Central and State Governments. I have been connected with it from the beginning and the

Chief Minister (ex-officio) is its Chairman. It is our desire that you be good enough to pay a visit to the Institute also, which need not take more than half an hour. May be Krishnaballabh Babu would also be writing to you about this and the public meeting at Pusa Road.

Let me add that while I have made the above requests, I would not like you to consider them at all, should they put undue strain on you. I mean this seriously, because your health is more important than any thing else; so please do not hesitate to say no.

With best wishes and regards,

Yours Sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister,
New Delhi.

Patna
Sept. 21, 1966

Dear Indiraji,

I am writting to draw your attention to a very serious situation that seems to be developing. You know of the long-standing agitation for banning cow-slaughter. In the last session of the Parliament also this issue had figured. I understand that Hindu religious leaders of top status, such as, some of the Jagadguru Sankacharyas, have decided to go on fasts unto death from November 20 this year. I have been given to understand that this desperate step is being contemplated in all seriousness. You can imagine what serious consequences might follow. It has been a common experience of the past few years that Government does not act until it is too late. Issues are not thought through and every preparation made to face consequences of decisions taken. The result is that Government is often forced to do things against its will under pressures of unhealthy type, thus lowering the Government in the eyes of the people. I ' would, therefore, very strongly advise you to ask the Home Ministry to investigate this matter thoroughly, if necessary to meet the Sankaracharyas and other religious leaders involved, and make an objective assessment so that an intelligent decision could be taken by you. There is not enough time and if this matter is treated with negligence, a most explosive situation might have to be faced. For myself, I cannot understand why in a Hindu majority country like India, where rightly or wrongly there is such strong feeling about cow-slaughter, there cannot be a legal ban. In all the Muslim countries, even those who are considered to be most modern, I doubt

if pork would be allowed to be sold or served in public places. I think the same would be true for Israel. Likewise, in some Christian countries on certain days of the year no meat is eaten or sold. From a purely rational point of view, all this may be considered to be irrational, but human life, as you know, is far more irrational than rational. I am enclosing for your information certain leaflets which have been supplied to me by the local leaders of this movement. I particularly draw your attention to one paragraph in one of the Hindi leaflets entitled PUJA MAHATMAOM KA AMARAN ANSHAN.

I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to Nandaji in order that the matter might receive expeditious attention.

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi.

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
Darjeeling,
13th October, 1966.

Dear Jayaprakashji,

Thank you for your letter of September 21 regarding the agitation for banning cow slaughter in the country. I am sorry there has been some delay in replying.

I appreciate the sentiments of those who are urging this course and am glad that you have shared your thoughts on the subject with me. The Government is considering this problem in all its aspects. Perhaps when we have occasion to meet next, we can discuss this matter.

I was sorry to hear that you have recently been down with influenza. I hope you are now fully recovered.

With kind regards to both of you,

Yours sincerely,
(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna-3.

APPENDIX-T

S.N. Dwivedy
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
(LOK SABHA)

Telengabazar,
Cuttack 1.
27.4.67

My dear Jayaprakashji,

I received your letter of April 17 and a copy of your press statement here yesterday.

I know you have strong views on this matter. Sugata Dasgupta met me in Delhi and told me about your feelings. But I have a feeling that your approach to this question has not been very objective from the very beginning. You have started with the premise that Dr. Zakir Hussain is the only suitable person to occupy this high office and therefore, in your anxiety, have issued statements which are not often based on facts. We did not expect this from you. The question of secularism has also been brought in order to support his candidature, which is most unfortunate.

You say that this contest is not between the Congress and the Opposition. But the Congress Party has deliberately made it so. It is not correct to say that the names were announced before a consensus could be discussed. It is true that the names found publicity, the same day we wrote to the Prime Minister. But you will see we have not even released to the press the copy of the letter written to the Prime Minister suggesting our panel of names for consideration. It somehow leaked as was natural when more than one party were involved. But the names of both Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Zakir Hussain were also being publicly mentioned as probable candidates. How did this publication prevent a discussion and try to reach a consensus. I still feel that if the Congress party had risen over party consideration on this very crucial issue, a contest could have been avoided. In all fairness, I would say, in that event, Mr. Subba Rao would have readily agreed to step down. I am really sorry that you did not take the trouble to know what has actually happened and immediately issued your second statement. Since most opposition parties have also sponsored your name, you could, if you had time, have played a definite role and intervened at the proper time.

It is not proper to bring personal considerations into this matter. It is a purely political and public issue and on calmer considerations, you may not take such an aggressive stand as you have taken on this issue.

How can you expect members of the same party in the Assembly and Parliament voting differently? So far as we are concerned, it is not only a decision of the Parliamentary Party, but our Central Party is also a party to this decision and accord-

ingly a circular has been issued to all members of the Parliament and state legislatures.

I am sorry on this matter we can not see eye to eye and we do not like the manner in which you have jumped into the fray.

With best regards,

Yours Sincerely,
(S. N. Dwivedy)

Sri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Patna.

April 17, 1967

Dear Mr.

It is a long time that I have had the pleasure of visiting Kohima and of meeting you and other Friends. But Dr. Aram keeps me in touch and when we met, I invariably enquire about you. Nagaland and you friends are very much in my thoughts and prayers.

I am wiring this to make a request. You know that there is to be, most unfortunately, a contest for the Presidentship of the Indian Union. It is futile now to enquire into the circumstances of this unfortunate issue. Our concern at this stage should be to see that the best possible choice is made. You know the Congress Party has nominated Dr. Zakir Hussain, the present Vice-President, for the President's office. I have no doubt that Dr. Hussain would be the best choice from every point of view. He is a perfect gentleman of great ability with a long record of public service. As he belongs to a minority community, Muslim, his elevation to the highest office in the land would enhance greatly India's prestige in the world and be most re-assuring to all the minority communities in the country—Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Parsee, etc.

On the other hand, the only other serious contender, Mr. Subba Rao, the ex-Chief Justice, has set a bad precedent, by considering and accepting, while still in service, a party candidature for a political office. In the words of India's eminent jurist, Mr. Motilal Setalvad, Mr. Subba Rao has committed a "judicial impropriety". His election to the Presidentship would set a seal on that impropriety. Our democracy cannot work properly unless the judiciary is protected from political allurements.

I hope, therefore, that you will exercise your great influence in assuring that members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly cast their votes in favour of Dr. Hussain.

,With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

P.S. I am also writing to Mr. T.N. Angami, Mr. Jasokie;

APPENDIX-U

**Begusarai
December 10, 1967**

Dear Indiraji,

I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of another statement of mine—this time on the Official Languages Bill. This statement has stirred up quite a storm in Patna, but all due mischievous propaganda of some parties and Hindi organizations. I have been very happy to find the firmness with which you have withstood the Opposition's onslaught. I hope God will grant enough good sense to the Congress M.Ps. to ensure that the Bill is passed.

With kind regards,

**Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)**

**Shrimati Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister, India,
New Delhi.**

APPENDIX-V

**RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN,
NEW DELHI-4.**

December 11, 1967.

My dear Jayaprakashji,

Thank you for your letter of the 5th December and the enclosed statement. I have read the statement with great care and I do hope it will awaken people to their responsibility. Gandhiji had once called Tagore "The Sentinel." I feel that is true of you today. All aspects of our public life need a very careful watch. May God give you the strength to warn our people in time.

With kindest regards,

**Yours sincerely,
Zakir Hussain**

**Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna-3.**

APPENDIX-W

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI

December 14, 1967

No. 1134-PMO/67

Dear Jayaprakashji,

I should like to express my appreciation of your public statement condemning recourse to violence and unconstitutional methods of agitation over the language issue. It was most welcome and timely. So was Vinobaji's. I am sorry that after the publication of your statement, some misguided elements should have organised an unseemly demonstration against you. Such insensate behaviour is indefensible and will hardly promote the cause of Hindi.

I am sorry for the delay in replying to your letter of the 5th December with which you sent me a copy of your press statement on the developments of West Bengal, Haryana and Bihar. I have noted your views.

I hope I shall have occasion to meet you before you leave for your trip abroad.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna 3.

APPENDIX-X

D.O. No. 336-TRG.
Grams:- "ACADEMY".
Phone:- 367.

K. K. Dass
Director.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ADMINISTRATION,
'CHARLEVILLE'
MUSSOORIE.

Dated: 11th October, 1968.
19th Asvina, 1890.

Dear Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,

I am writing this to extend you an invitation to visit the Academy sometime at your convenience and address the probationers. Probably November and December are too early for you. I would suggest any dates in March or April, 1969. I need hardly add that we keenly look forward to your visit. I am aware how busy you are but I hope you will be able to find some time for us.

Arrangements for your accommodation etc. will be made in the Academy itself and we will also pay for travelling expenses.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
(K. K. Dass)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan
Sadaquat Ashram,
PATNA (Bihar).

APPENDIX-Y

Sarvodaya Ashram
Sokhodeora
July 3, 1969.

Dear Shri Yashwantraoji.

When I had met you on the 30th June to discuss, among other things, the possibility of President's rule in Bihar, I had hardly imagined that the Paswan Government would fall the very next day. In this connection I issued a press statement yesterday of which a copy is enclosed. I should like to draw your attention particularly to that part of my statement in which I have emphasised the need of competent and effective leadership during President's rule. In a public statement I could not be any more explicit, but Shri Kanungo and the present Chief Secretary must be replaced. If advisors are appointed—which I do not consider necessary in case of a competent Governor and an equally competent Chief Secretary being posted—they should be persons with drive and imagination and preferably not pensioners.

I also feel that President's rule should last longer than 3 months as apparently visualised by Shri Kanungo. Three months' President's rule would serve no purpose whatever because, on the one hand, it would keep the secretariat in suspense and, on the other, keep the political horse-trading at a high pitch. I am quite clear in my mind that there should be sufficient time allowed to lapse so that (a) there are important political realignments made, not on the basis of trading in ministerial jobs but on that of political convictions; and (b) so that the law regarding defections is enacted.

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

P.S. After the above was written I learnt from the A.I.R. that Shri Kanungo's recommendation has been accepted by you all. Congratulations. But in that case the above becomes immediately relevant. The Assembly must be dissolved, partly as a lesson to the dishonest legislators, but mostly in order that the political climate may clear up and the Administration may have a chance to attend seriously to its job. And, please, there should be no further delay in enacting the law on defection.

Sarvodaya Ashram
Sokhodeora
July 4, 1969

Dear Indiraji,

I am sorry that your home-coming was marred by the

wretched and tattered appearance of Bihar. So, may I congratulate you on the decision that you and your Government have taken. But there are many things yet to be done to give the much abused state a chance.

1. President's rule with the present Governor and Chief Secretary will be a disaster. The verdict of the public on the previous term of President's rule is unanimous about its ineffectiveness and immobility. At that time too I had tried to offer you and the Home Minister my unasked advice, but nothing was done.

2. A short Presidential rule, with the present Assembly in suspension, would prove to be utterly futile. The Administration is bound to mark time during the interregnum, at what cost to the State is not difficult to imagine. Further, party strengths being what they are in the existing Assembly, and there being no deterrence—rather every encouragement—to defection, there will be no prospect whatever of either a more principled coalition or a more stable government. Thus, President's rule plus a suspended Assembly would be a combination of the worst of both worlds.

3. Therefore, in fairness to the people and for the sake of cleaner politics, the Assembly must be dissolved. The dishonest politicians, which means not the defectors, but also those who took them to their bosom, which in turn means all the present members of the Legislature, must be punished by forcing them to go back to the people again for their suffrage.

4. Also, it is necessary to allow sufficient time before the Assembly convenes for Parliament to consider the report of the Committee on Defection and enact a law in that behalf. By the way, I was shocked to hear this morning on the A.I.R. that Shri A.P. Sharma, while claiming to have 166 MLAs in a now Congress-led coalition, was shameless enough to share the secret with the public that the two Muslim Congress MLAs who had defected to Shri Paswan's side for ministerial gadis were ready to return to the Congress fold! Not only the two MLAs but also the B.P.C.C. President and his colleagues, who are prepared to countenance such political immorality should be given the boot by the Congress leadership.

5. A long spell of President's rule with the dissolution of the Assembly, might produce a healthier realignment of political forces in the State.

For the reasons given above, I urge in short: (a) a long term of President's rule; (b) dissolution of the Assembly; (c) replacement of the present Governor and Chief Secretary with more competent, energetic and imaginative officers; (d) urgent, enact-

ment of the contemplated law on defections.

With best wishes and regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister, India,
New Delhi.

DO No. 33/14/69-Poll. I (A)/DS
HOME MINISTER
INDIA
New Delhi,
July 29, 1969.

My dear Jayaprakash Narayanji,

Kindly refer to your letter dated July 3, 1969, regarding the President's rule in Bihar.

We have sent two competent Advisers to the Governor. I understand that their appointment has been generally welcomed.

We also intend to bring forward suitable legislation in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on Defections.

Yours sincerely,
(Y. B. Chavan)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna-3.

APPENDIX-Z

Circuit House,
Thippagondana Halli,
Bangalore, Mysore State
July 5, 1972

Dear Indiaraji,

Congratulations on the success of the Simla talks. I hope Bhutto would have the good sense to recognise Bangladesh soon because without that his most immediate problems are not going to be solved. It appears from the papers that a very understanding relationship has been established between you and Mr. Bhutto. This is far more important than any agreement written down on paper.

I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of my statement. I should like to draw your attention to my remarks about "Bihari" Muslims in Bangladesh. Whatever the Press or the International Red Cross may say, I have no doubt from the report I have received from my Sarvodaya colleagues that the plight of these people is really pitiable. I do not doubt that the lives of the Bengalis in Pakistan is also far from happy. Some time back I had written to the Swiss Ambassador in Delhi to use his good offices with the Government of Pakistan to allow a group of Sarvodaya workers to go to that country to meet people and study the situation there. One of the implicit objectives was to study the condition of the Bengalis there. But there has been no reply from the Swiss Embassy so far.

I am afraid you are working too hard and I hope you will take care of your health. I am glad you decided to stay behind in Simla for a couple of days for rest.

Prabha and I came here a fortnight ago for rest and we shall be spending another fortnight here.

With kind regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister; India,
New Delhi.

APPENDIX-A1

For Favour of Publication **Press Statement by Jayaprakash Narayan**

I would like most earnestly to request the Prime Minister and the Food and Agriculture Minister to reconsider their policy of taking over wholesale trade in foodgrains. The Conference of the Federation of All India Grain Dealers Associations has put forth very cogent arguments and Mr. Kirloskar in his presidential address has tendered mature and wise advice. It will be thoughtless to brush it all aside as special pleading of vested interests. If Government persists in its ill-considered policy it will be the common people who will suffer. The worst sufferers will be the poor. Government has no expertise and no suitable machinery for such a complicated, specialised and far-flung commercial operation. Besides, the inescapable corruption and inefficiency of no matter what machinery the Government sets up will multiply a hundred-fold the evils of hoarding and profiteering that it is meant to eradicate. The remedy will be far worse than the disease. The criminal mess that Government's purchase and distribution machinery has made of the American milo business should serve as a lesson and warning. To those who prattle all the time of monopoly and socialism, I should like to say that the take-over of the food-grains trade has nothing to do either with monopoly or socialism. Indeed this policy is sure to discredit socialism in the eyes not of the rich but of the masses, and it will hurt the ruling party itself. As a shrewd politician the Prime Minister should have no difficulty in seeing this. I hope therefore that in the interest of all concerned, and most of all in the interest of the people, Government will give up this fool-hardy adventure.

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Bombay:
13.3.73

Camp:
Ruparel House
38, Ridge Road
Bombay-6
16 March 1973

Dear Indiraji,

I am enclosing a copy of a recent statement I published in the press regarding your Government's decision to take-over whole.

sale trade in foodgrains. I know that this policy has already been decided upon after long deliberation but it still does appear to me that its full implications have not been properly worked out and and taken care of. I understand that this decision is considered to be a political one and therefore, is irreversible for political reasons. If this is true I earnestly plead with you to keep politics away at least from the peoples' food. You as a seasoned politician should have no difficulty in understanding this. I am quite sure that your economic advisers, who are not obsessed with politics will be able to advise you as to what needs be done, and is also feasible, in order to combat the evils of hoarding and profiteering which the Government are rightly concerned about. Such a pragmatic policy, honestly administered, will be a far more efficacious remedy than the one decided upon, which I am sure will prove to be worse than the disease.

With best wishes and regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Encls. As above
Smt. Indira Gandhi
Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi

APPENDIX-A2

PRIME MINISTER

No. 400-PMO/73

New Delhi,
9th June, 1973.

Dear Jayaprakashji,

I have your letter of May 16. I saw your statement in the newspapers when it was released to the press. Now that you have taken the trouble of sending it to me, I presume a few comments from me would be in order and might even be expected.

It is gracious of you to assure me that you are not against me personally. It has been a privilege to have had your friendship over the years, whatever our political differences. Dissent is indispensable to democracy. Equally indispensable is a readiness to shoulder responsibilities in order to fulfil the dreams of a people.

You have said that your early visions have remained unfulfilled. This has been true of all battles, all quests. But the duty of working for the vision continues. It is the function of our political system and of all organs of Government—the legislature, the executive and the judiciary—to work for the vision.

You have drawn some dismal conclusions from the recent appointment of the Chief Justice. May I submit to you that these conclusions are unwarranted? There is no question here of the executive subordinating the judiciary. Some time ago there was a fear of a head-on collision between the legislature and the judiciary. Many in the legal profession declared that Parliament would tend to be irresponsible unless it was restrained by the judiciary. Even at that time I pointed out that the theory that the judiciary alone was the custodian of the Constitution was erroneous. Fortunately the Court itself has changed its stand on this question with the repudiation of the Golak Nath judgment.

The experience of other nations with an independent judiciary also proves that although the judiciary is generally on the side of the *status quo*, it does respond to changed social needs. A famous instance of change is the attitude of the American court. Once it had upheld slavery and racial discrimination but later disowned them and walked in step with the more liberal urges of society. The various pronouncements regarding property by our own court have been so confusing that many people, who do not believe that property is a sacrosanct fundamental right, would wish our judiciary to take a more modern view of the matter.

Frequent reversals of stand, not always in a more liberal, more humane direction, were the main difficulty with our judicial decisions in the last decade or so. There was obvious need for greater continuity of ideas and vision. The seniority principle had led to an unduly high turnover of chief justices. I take it that no

one maintains that the rule of law is safeguarded only by the principle of seniority. In the appointment of the new Chief Justice, we have only freed ourselves of a convention which had the sanction neither of the Constitution nor of rationality. It would be atrocious to think that the independence of the judiciary is thereby affected. The outcry and controversy which have attended the appointment seem to me to be wholly misplaced.

You have spoken about the competing rights of democracy and socialism. It has been our endeavour throughout our struggle for freedom and during these 25 years as an independent nation to reconcile the two. I am perhaps more confident than you that we can achieve this reconciliation. Democracy, independence of the judiciary and fundamental rights are not in danger. They would be threatened if we were to allow our faith to be eclipsed by defeatism and if we help alliances of the extreme right and left.

Yours sincerely,

(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
PATNA-3.

APPENDIX-A3

J. B. KRIPALANI
Personal & Confidential

A 4, SARVODAYA ENCLAVE,
SRI AUROBINDO MARG,
NEW DELHI-17
PHONE: 74349
16 June 1973

My dear Jayaprakash,

In the course of my life, I have seen many ups and downs for our country, but never have I seen India in such a sad plight. Politically, no standards remain. The structure of polity, laboriously built over fifty years, lies in shambles, a play-thing of a few persons in power. The economy crumbles under chronic mismanagement; people groar under man-made crises. Judiciary, whose separation from the Executive was the persistent demand of the nationalists from 1885 onwards, is now made subservient to the Government. Internationally, India remains largely isolated, subordinated to one super-power. People face ever mounting difficulties, where prices rise by 3 to 4 per cent *a month*, where employment stagnates or shrinks, where daily necessities of life are not just scarce but unobtainable. What wonder that the people feel dazed and lost? Morally, the atmosphere stinks. Every man is a victim of frustration, anxiety and despair. For the first time, future holds only darkness and fear. Men grow petty and dwarf-ness spreads over the land.

All the values that we cherish—freedom, democracy, socialism, welfare—are steadily disappearing. We, along with many others, devoted our efforts to establish and uphold these values. Can we today remain helpless spectators to this tragedy—the destruction of a nation's life-work? Maybe, in the past some matters divided us. But, today faced by an overwhelming crisis, we can rely only on what unites us.

I am inviting a few influential friends to get together, so that we may concert measures that will give to our people some hope and opportunity to salvage the future. I count on your co-operation. May I request you to make it possible to meet at my house on the 1st July '73 at 11 am? Please acknowledge the receipt of this letter.

With greeting and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
J. B. Kripalani

Encl: One
Shri Jayaprakash Narayan

ENCLOSURE

The accompanying letter has been addressed to the following friends:

- 1) Shri Advani
- 2) Shri Atal Bihari Vajpai
- 3) Shri Charan singh
- 4) Dr Faridi
- 5) Shri Goray (Fernandes)
- 6) Shri Madhu Limeye
- 7) Shri Jayaprakash Narayan
- 8) Shri Karpoori Thakur
- 9) Shri Pillo Mody
- 10) Shri Biju Patnaik
- 11) Shri Rajnarain
- 12) Shri Sadiq Ali
- 13) Shri Shyam Nandan Mishra
- 14) D.M.K. Representative
- 15) Shri Ashok Mehta
- 16) Smt Sucheta Kripalani
- 17) Shri Kamat

Patna

June 22, 1973

My dear Dada,

Thanks for your letter of June 16. I am glad that you have called a meeting of important Opposition leaders. I would have been happy to accept your invitation because, even though I am not in party politics myself, I am deeply interested in the consolidation of the Opposition, which is so essential for the success of the parliamentary system of democracy which we have adopted. But I am sorry that I have already arranged to be in Calcutta for a few days from June 30 to July 4. I may be in Delhi either in the early or the late part of August.

May I say that you have not given sufficient notice to your distinguished invitees, who have to come from nearly all part of the country. A minimum of a month's notice was necessary. Perhaps the best time to call such a meeting was when Parliament was to meet next.

However, you have my best wishes for the success of your initiative. I am taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of the press statement that I had issued from Calcutta after Biju had met me there.

Yours sincerely,
(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Acharya J. B. Kripalani,
4 A, Sarvodaya Enclave,
Sri Aurbindo Marg,
New Delhi-17.

APPENDIX-A4

PRIME MINISTER

New Delhi,
November 14, 1973.

Dear Jayaprakashji,

Thank you for your letter of October 31, which for some reason was received in my office on the 12th of this month.

I should have been glad to participate in the foundation function of the Balwantray Mehta building. But Parliament will be in session during the days that you have indicated and I shall not be in town on the 17th and 18th. Perhaps the function could go on without me. I shall try to visit the building after it is completed.

I have also received your letter of the 8th. I had seen some of the articles in Everyman's. I can only say that I do not agree with many points of your analysis or conclusions. The charge that I am allowing myself to be dragged into anyone's net is preposterous. I have also read your forthright reply to the charges made against you. Deteractors never care about the pain they cause to people or the harm they do to truth and to decencies in public life.

I hope you are taking care of your health.

Yours sincerely,

(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna-3.

APPENDIX-A5

PRIME MINISTER

**New Delhi,
February 27, 1974.**

Dear Jayaprakashji,

From what you told me when we last met, I was left with the impression that you were leaving Delhi. Only yesterday I learnt from Shri Prabhakar Rao that you have been unwell and confined to bed here. This has naturally caused anxiety. I hope you will take complete rest and soon overcome the result of the overstrain.

You must be happy, as we all are, at Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh even though this has come about under an Islamic smokescreen. Let us hope that this will lead to further normalisation.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Indira Gandhi)

**Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Gandhi Peace Foundation,
New Delhi.**

APPENDIX-A6

Persona!

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN
Permanent Address:
KADAM KUAN, PATNA-3
BIHAR, INDIA
Telephone: 51239

CAMP
New Delhi
February 28. 1974

Dear Indu.

Thanks for your letter of yesterday. I was to leave for Patna on the 16th morning. But the same night I fell ill. I am better now, but the recovery is rather slow. It was a case of infection of the lungs.

I have been thinking about what we discussed that night and I shall try to keep in touch with you through Ganga Babu. I shall talk to the Party Leaders on my next visit to Delhi in the 3rd week of March. I am leaving here on the 4th.

I was glad to see you looking so well, spruce and charming that night. May you remain like that all your life.

Yours affectionately

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Mrs Indira Gandhi
Prime Minister of India
NEW DELHI

APPENDIX-A7

**PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
June 29, 1974.**

Dear Jayaprakashji,

Thank you for your letter of June 20th from Patna. It arrived on Tuesday. It is kind of you to say there is no confrontation between us. I assure you that I do not have any feeling of confrontation either.

It is difficult to know what to write because of your remark to a newspaperman and others that "all bonds" between you and me have snapped and that you find no point in having a dialogue with me.

Reading the published account of your Patna speech of June 5, your interview in the Statesman, and now your letter, I was filled with sadness. You are angry that people from the Prime Minister and Shri Dikshit downwards "have the arrogance to give lessons in democracy to Jayaprakash Narayan". Would you not agree that democracy gives us the right to think and talk about it, as it does to anybody else, irrespective of position or background? May I also, in all humility, put to you that it is possible that others, who may not be your followers, are equally concerned about the country, about the people's welfare, and about the need to cleanse public life of weakness and corruption.

As a political thinkers, you are entitled to speculate upon political forms and techniques (such as your concept of partyless government) which in your view would better preserve the essence of the democratic process. Some of these ideas which appear rather utopian to me could perhaps work if the whole population consisted of Jayaprakashes. Societies need recognisable and functioning institutions to live by. I know that all institutions carry in them the germs of their own erosion. We should constantly strive to combat these germs. But the courses you have been suggesting; if I may submit, do not vouchsafe the remedies. For example, you have observed that if all students gave up their studies for a year, a better system of education would emerge of its own. Surely the evolution of social phenomena is far too complex a process to allow one to proceed on the basis of simple spontaneity.

In carrying the responsibility which has been entrusted to me, I do know that people take shelter behind ideals and institutions to gain personal ends. You have spoken of high election expenses. I have more than once invited party leaders and other public men to sit together with us to find ways of reducing the cost of election. Some suggestions have been made which we

have considered and which will have to be put to the leaders of the Opposition Parties. You have repeatedly spoken of corruption. I have offered to inquire into all prima facie charges of corruption. But the irony is that corruption charges are used by some people as a political weapon for partisan purposes. There are instances—I shall not name names—when people who were called corrupt while in the Congress seem to have come clean the moment they are out of the Congress. Is this not rather arbitrary?

You have devoted your letter of June 20 almost exclusively to my Bhubaneswar speech. I did not take your name or make any references personally derogatory to you. I cannot help if some newspapers added their own interpretation. I did refer to a businessman's hospitality, not as an accusation but to wonder if his reputation was not public knowledge and to indicate that corruption was prevalent in many sections and had to be dealt with wherever it exists. Are you sure that all the people who today follow you and support your movement are different in their background and intentions from the people, who, according to you, have found shelter behind government? Recently I saw a report of young men of your movement preventing dehoarding and protecting dishonest traders in Bihar. Apparently they have not succeeded in keeping their political ideals unsullied by their economic interests. This only goes to prove that the problems we are up against cannot yield to simple solutions however catchy they may sound.

There is an upheaval in the international political and economic system, and nations are realising that a new future can be shaped only through working together. The old psychology of crusades is being given up. My own effort has been to foster the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation, whether with our neighbours or to solve our domestic problems. I do feel that it is the responsibility of everyone whose words carry some influence to inculcate an outlook of cooperation and guide people to see their problems in the larger perspective.

I hope there have been no after-effects after your operation and that you are keeping better.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
Patna.

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Permanent Address:

KADAM KUAN, PATNA-3

BIHAR, INDIA

Telephone : 51239

CAMP

Brahma Vidya Mandir

Paunar, Wardha

July 10, 1974

My dear Indiraji.

Thanks for your letter of June 29. I am much relieved to learn that you "do not have any feeling of confrontation (with me) either". At least one ghost has been laid to rest! I do hope you will tell this to Chandra Shekharji and other friends in your Party who have been worried over confrontation between you and me. This should help everyone to look at things in an impartial and objective manner.

It is difficult for anyone to form a true opinion of what has been said or done by another if press or other reports (such as verbal) do not place one's remarks in their proper context. For instance, take the remark about all bonds between you and me having been snapped. What I have actually said is that my personal relations with Indiraji are at an end unless she makes some public amends for her remarks at Bhubaneswar, which not only some pressmen, as you say, but everyone whom I have met has understood to apply to me. I myself have taken them in the same light.

Take again your reference to my Patna speech about you and Dikshitji and others having the "arrogance" to teach me lessons in Democracy. Without the context this makes me out to be an insufferably conceited person. What I had actually said was that the very people—and I did mention your name and Dikshitji's—who think it fit to teach me democracy have done everything possible to prevent youngmen and people of Bihar from exercising their elementary democratic right to participate in a peaceful demonstration and meeting. It was that action of your Government in Bihar that had provoked me to make those remarks.

There are several other points in your letter about which I have much to say. But I am afraid misunderstanding to grow and not lessening by correspondence between us. So I shall not say anything about the other points except one. You have remarked upon my letter of June 20 being almost exclusively devoted to your Bhubaneswar speech. If you recall the background in which our present correspondence started, there should be nothing remarkable in my last letter being almost wholly devoted to your Bhubaneswar remarks. You remember that I wrote you from Vellore that I would reply to that part of your letter of May 22

which dealt with my reaction to your Bhubaneswar speech only when I returned to Patna. This is what I did in my last letter.

It appears from your letter of June 29 that you do not think it necessary to clarify publicly your position in regard to your remarks at Bhubaneswar because you did not take my name there and you "cannot help if some newspapers added their own interpretation". This saddens me beyond words. But please yourself. I am only a private citizen but I do have my self-respect. It is not I who ever thought of asking you to make any public amends for your remarks. The question arose only when some Congress friends came to plead that my personal relations with you should be repaired.

With best wishes and regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister,
Govt. of India,
New Delhi.

APPENDIX-A8

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Permanent Address :

KADAM KUAN, PATNA-3

BIHAR, INDIA.

Telephone : 51239

Patna

April 1, 1974

Dear Devakant Babu,

This is just to introduce my younger brother, Raja, about whom I have already written you a letter.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

**Shri Devakant Barooah,
Minister for Petroleum & Chemicals,
Government of India,
New Delhi.**

APPENDIX-A9

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
April 22, 1974.

My dear Jayaprakashji,

I have been meaning to write to you for some time but the atmosphere became such that it was difficult to find the right words to convey my feelings. I have been hurt that you should think that any words of mine were a personal criticism. However, this is not the occasion to go into this or any matter.

I have heard that you are leaving for Vellore tomorrow and are to be operated upon. You have my sincere good wishes for the success of the operation and a speedy return to good health.

With warm regards,

Yours Sincerely,

(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
May 22, 1974.

Dear Jayaprakashji,

Shri Chandra Shekhar has met me after his return from Vellore. I am glad to know that your operation was successful. I hope the doctors are satisfied with the pace of your recovery.

Many friends are distressed that there should be any misunderstanding between us. I have had the privilege of your friendship for many years. The mutual regard that existed between my father and you is well known as is my mother's affection for Prabhavati. Even the highest personal regard and affection need not preclude an honest difference in political or philosophical outlook. You have not seen eye to eye with my father, nor now with me. We have criticised each other, but I hope we have done it without personal bitterness or questioning of each other's motives. I have consistently tried not to be confined by my office, but to reach out for ideas, for understanding and for co-operation in the task of solving problems. I shall continue to value your sympathy.

I have received your telegram of the 15th regarding the railway strike. You must have seen from the newspapers that I met a group of opposition leaders on Saturday and Shri S. M. Joshi yesterday. In spite of our genuine desire, no solution has emerged.

I should like to assure you that I do not have any sense of false prestige nor do I wish for a confrontation with railwaymen or for that matter with any group of workers. It was only after we found that the period of negotiations was being used by extremist union leaders to prepare for action which would have crippled the country's economy that Government felt it could not neglect its responsibility to ensure the movement of essential supplies. The vast majority of railwaymen did not go along with the extremist leadership but have willingly cooperated with the Government in preventing the breakdown of our transport system.

I am glad that you have appealed to the striking employees to suspend the strike. The reported proceedings of their Action Committee, however, give the impression that they want to persist in their present course of action. I wonder whether the resumption of negotiations in this frame of mind would lead to any settlement.

I know that there are several anomalies in our wage structure. Indeed there are distortions and shortcomings in our economic system and political functioning. There is scope as well as need for earnest discussion on all these issues at various levels. I had hoped that you would help in this process. But I do feel that these issues should be settled in a calm atmosphere and not when emotions are aroused, nor can any matter be decided on the streets.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
(Indira Gandhi)

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan,
Vellore.

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